FRIDAY
April 12, 2024

BENGALURU
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CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE

O.J. Simpson, American football star, dies

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WAR RAGES ON

Israel on alert after Iranian threat

WORLD » PAGE IV

WAY FORWARD

China seeks stable ties with India

NEWS » PAGE 14

LARGER IMPACT

Bilateral ties in the time of polls

Statements during campaigns affecting foreign policy a concern

EDITORIAL » PAGE 10

PERFECT OUTING

Bumrah and batters help MI crush RCB

SPORT » PAGE 15

Apple changes hacking alert wording after India 'pressure'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Apple, Inc. is now calling "state-backed attackers" "mercenary" hackers in email alerts to affected customers, and has changed this language on support documentation on its website as well.

This change from the iPhone maker comes months after a report of "pressure" from the Indian government to give authorities deniability for hacking attempts on political leaders, journalists and activists, who have been alerted to intrusions on their phones from spyware such as Pegasus, which Intelligence Bureau acquired in 2017. The change, which now takes heat off of individual nation-states following hacking attempts, coincided with media reports on Thursday morning.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 14

ADB projects India's GDP growth in 2024-25 at 7%

Retail inflation to ease to 4.6% this year and food inflation to cool to 5.7% if farm output returns to usual, says lender; revival expected in rural consumption, but exports, FDI inflows still seen muted

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

India's economy is expected to remain robust over the next two years, even though headline growth in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is forecast to slow from 7.6% in 2023-24 to 7% this year, before improving to 7.2% in 2025-26, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said.

As per its Asia Development Outlook report released on Thursday, the bank expects retail inflation to ease to 4.6% this year and 4.5% in 2025-26. India's "persistent" food inflation is expected to drop to 5.7% as farm output returns to normal trends this year.

With the U.S. reporting a resurgence in inflation in March, dimming prospects of much-anticipated interest rate cuts from the Federal Reserve, the ADB noted that a 'higher for longer' interest rate regime would have some impact on Asia's inflation outlook, with a slightly smaller dent in growth.

However, this impact would be "more pronounced and persistent" for India, given the higher sensitivity of its inflation pace to exchange rate fluctuations, and its greater reliance on imported goods, it said. Moreover, if the spike in shipping costs triggered by the strife in the Red Sea persists, it could add to inflation pressures across developing Asia.

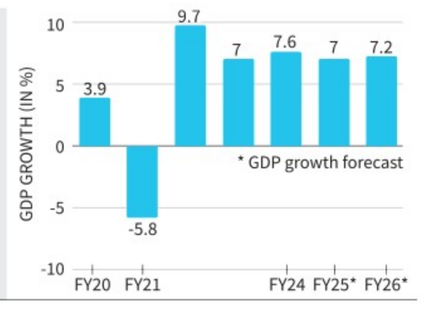
A projected normal monsoon this year will also help revive rural consumption, which was muted last year due to erratic rainfall affecting the farm sector, with greater demand for work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme signalling the resultant stress.

"In India, growth is forecast to remain strong as rising consumption complements continued investment growth," said Abdul Abiad, director of ADB's macroeconomics research division. As India accounts for 80% of South Asia's GDP, it is still the fastest-growing sub-region with improving domestic demand as prices moderate in most economies, he noted.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 14

Projected slowdown

India's GDP growth is forecast by the Asian Development Bank to slow to 7% this year before improving to 7.2% in 2025-26



Most Indians believe in plurality: survey

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

An overwhelming number, 79% of those surveyed in the CSDS-Lokniti poll aver that "India belongs to all religions equally, not just Hindus", with only 11% saying that "India belongs only to Hindus". This belief in plurality was more pronounced in urban areas (85% in towns and 84% in cities) and higher among the educated (83%) as compared to those with no schooling (72%).

Yet, while only 8% of the respondents said the Ram Mandir was their most important concern, 22% of them mentioned this as the "most liked action" of the BJP-led government. Forty-eight per cent of the respondents also expressed the belief that the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya will consolidate Hindu identity.

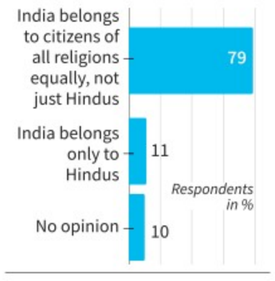
The survey also revealed that 58% of the respondents expressed some or great distrust in the Election Commission. Nearly 45% suggested the likelihood that electronic voting machines could be manipulated by the ruling party, a lot or somewhat.

MORE REPORTS ON
» PAGES 11 & 12

Unity in diversity

A majority believe that India belongs to citizens of all religions equally, in the CSDS-Lokniti pre-poll survey

Question: Which statement do you agree with the most?



THE HINDU CSDS-LOKNITI
Pre-poll Survey 2024

NEARBY

Gruha Jyothi beneficiaries down by 50K

BENGALURU
While many consumers have noticed that their electricity consumption has gone up by at least 50 units, data from the Energy Department shows the beneficiaries of Gruha Jyothi scheme in February were lower by 50,000 when compared to January. » Page 5

Water crisis: Residents to boycott polls

BENGALURU
Water crisis has now hit the Lok Sabha elections too with residents of a layout in J.P. Nagar deciding to boycott the polls, owing to the apathy by BWSSB in providing Cauvery water supply. » Page 4

METROPLUS » PAGE 7

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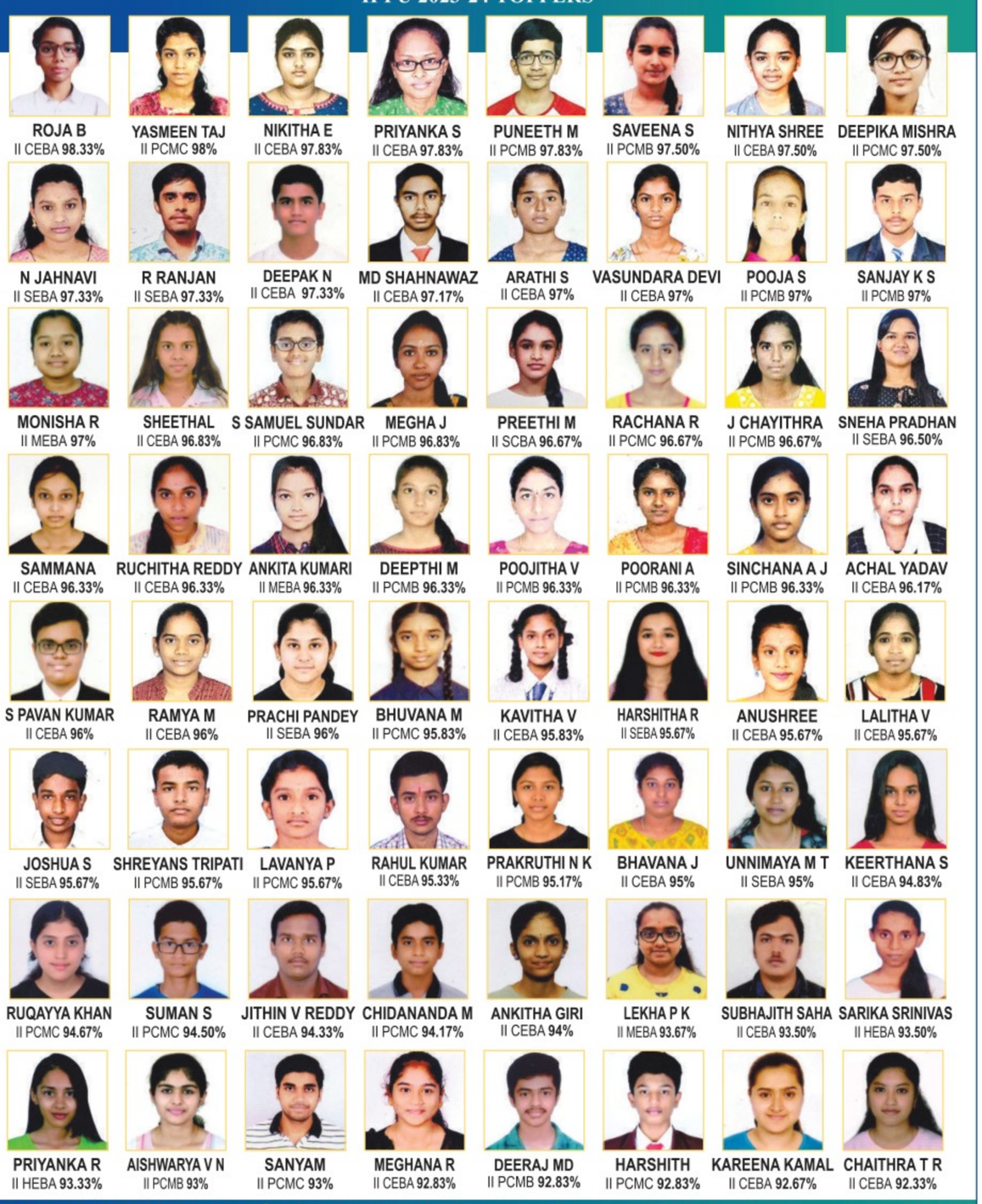

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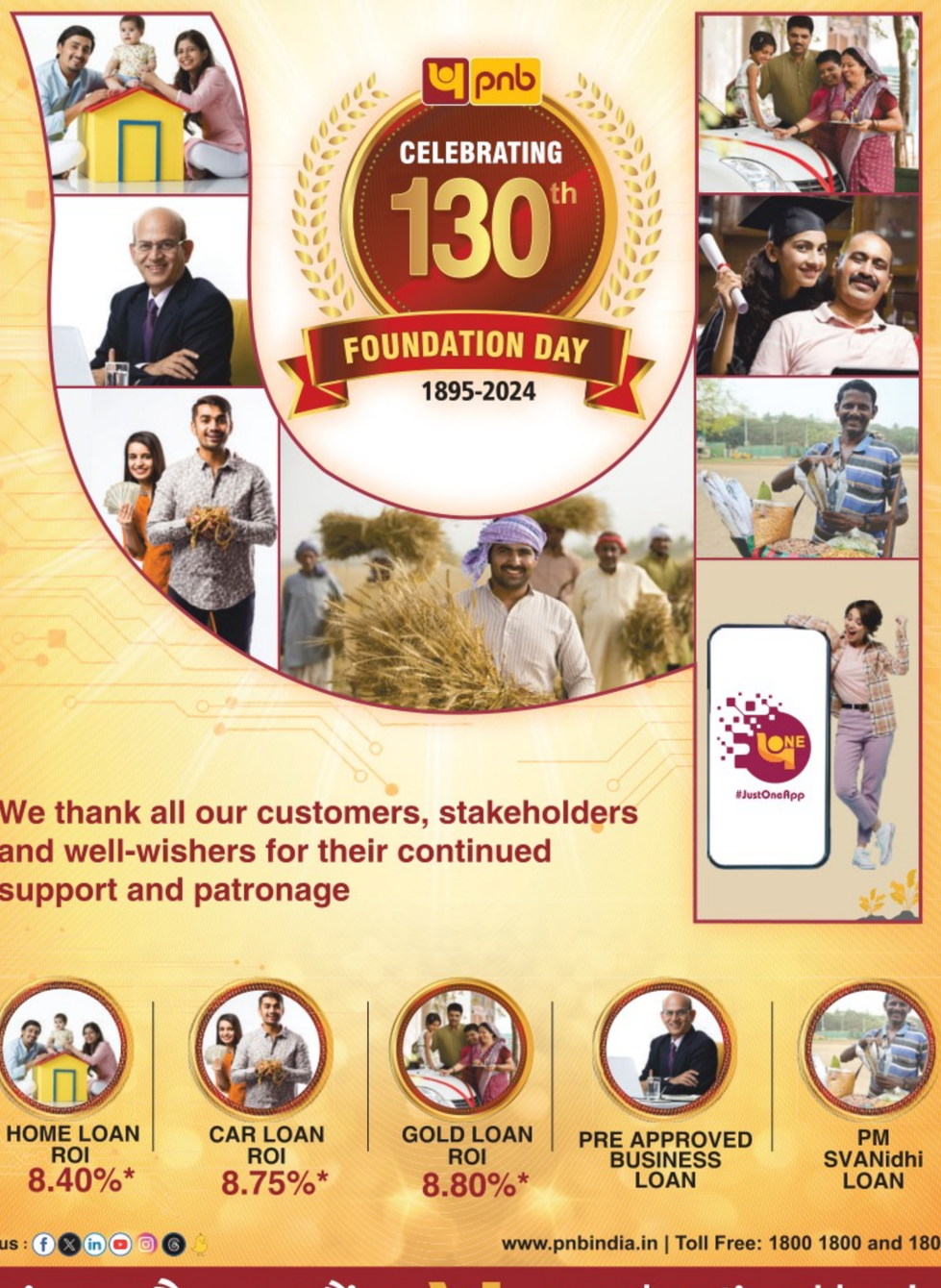

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JD(S) is on the verge of dissolution: DKS

A day after the verbal duel with JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy on meeting Adichunchanagiri mutt seer Nirmalananda Swami, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Thursday said the JD(S) has "reached a situation of dissolution." Mr. Shivakumar asked: "Where is the JD(S)? Their leaders themselves are involved in finishing the party. I would like the presence of JD(S), but former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda's son-in-law C.N. Manjunath is contesting on the BJP symbol. The JD(S) is on the verge of dissolution."

The Congress made a mistake by striking an alliance with the JD(S) in 2019. "Now the JD(S) has made a bigger mistake by entering into an alliance with the BJP," he said. Meanwhile, journalist Deepak Thimmaiah joined Congress.

Journalist Deepak Thimmaiah joined the Congress on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

'Tapping' of seer's phone is the talking point

Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy's statement that JD(S) leader H.D. Kumaraswamy, when he was Chief Minister, was responsible for phone tapping of Vokkaliga seer Nirmalananda Swami, head of Adichunchanagiri mutt, has added more fuel to the war of words between the Congress and the BJP-JD(S) alliance partners. Sparks have been flying between the two ever since 14 contestants of the BJP-JD(S) alliance visited the seer with prominent Vokkaliga leaders. Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar responded to it by stating that it was the BJP that had brought down the "Vokkaliga government". Mr. Shivakumar, responding to Mr. Cheluvarayaswamy's statement, said: "There is proof about that, but I do not wish to talk about it now."

> I have said in all the languages I know that I am not going to withdraw. My well-wishers have also said I should not give up.
>
> **K.S. ESHWARAPPA**
> on decision to contest as an Independent from Shivamogga

BJP releases audio, video content for poll campaign

The BJP State unit on Thursday released video content, reels, and songs for its poll campaign.

Apart from sharing them on social media, the party will also play them through its campaign vehicles that have LED display screens.

> Let Eshwarappa do whatever he believes he should do. I am not worried about him contesting elections from Shivamogga.
>
> **B.S. YEDIYURAPPA**
> BJP veteran leader

Mahadev Patil, Marathi activist, selling tea in his pushcart near Barrister Nath Pai circle in Belagavi. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

MES to field candidates in Belagavi and Uttara Kannada

Rishikesh Bahadur Desai
BELAGAVI

Belagavi-based political party Maharashtra Ekikaran Samiti has announced that it will nominate candidates in two Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka. Mahadev Patil will be its candidate in Belagavi and Niranjan Sardesai in Uttara Kannada (erstwhile Canara) seat.

Both the candidates, however, will contest as independents as MES is a registered party, but not a recognised party. They will get priority in the allotment of free symbols, but cannot claim exclusive symbols as per provisions of the Representation of People's Act. Since the 1950s, MES has been seeking merger of all Marathi-speaking areas in Karnataka from Khanapur in Belagavi to Aurad in Bidar with Maharashtra. It has been working with the Maharashtra government to enrol Marathi speakers in 865 villages and towns in Karnataka in the Mahatma Phule health scheme of the neighbouring State.

Mr. Patil, 66, has been associated with the MES for over four decades. He runs a roadside tea shop. He describes himself as "Belgaumcha sarvasamanya Marathi manus" (an ordinary Marathi-speaker of Belagavi). He says: "If a tea-seller can become the PM, why can't he be the MP of Belagavi?"

His candidature is expected to eat into the vote share of the BJP and the Congress. BJP nominee Jagadish Shettar is banking on the votes of the Maratha youth, considered the saffron party's traditional vote base. But the MES counts Maratha youth among its cadre, and will aim for their votes.

The MES campaign may also stunt the chances of Congress nominee Mrinal Hebbalkar, whose mother and Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar has been elected from Belagavi Rural, which is considered a Maratha majority Assembly seat.

Mr. Sardesai is a 40-year-old IT engineer working in a private firm in Pune. He hails from Khanapur in Belagavi district, that is part of the Uttara Kannada Lok Sabha constituency. He may pose a problem for Congress candidate Anjali Nimbalkar. Both belong to the Kshatriya Maratha community.

Dr. Nimbalkar has served as the the MLA of Khanapur for one term. Their fight is expected to not only divide Maratha votes, but also reduce the vote flow towards the BJP.

Shivaram Hebbar's son joins Congress

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

BJP MLA Arabail Shivaram Hebbar's son Vivek Hebbar on Thursday joined the Congress along with his supporters at Banavasi in Uttara Kannada district.

Mr. Vivek joined the party in the presence of State Congress Vice-President and former MLC Ivan D'Souza and others.

For a while now there have been rumours about the possibility of Mr. Shivaram, MLA from Yellapur Assembly seat, joining the Congress. He had not turned up for voting during the polls to four seats of the Rajya Sabha from Karnataka held on February 27, causing embarrassment to the BJP. The senior BJP leader was earlier with the Congress.

Since 2009, BJP has retained 13 LS seats consistently, JD(S) one, and Cong. none

Every election is different, and BJP entering into an alliance with JD(S) shows they know the party is not as strong as it was in 2019: Psephologists

SEAT TALLY

K.V. Aditya Bharadwaj
BENGALURU

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has consistently led the seat tally in Lok Sabha elections in Karnataka since 2004. If the 2009 Lok Sabha elections is taken as the cut off, as that was the first election after delimitation of seats in 2008, the BJP has never lost 13 seats. The JD(S) has won one seat consistently, while the Congress does not have even a single seat that it has consistently won during this period.

The seats which the BJP never lost are: Bagalkot, Bengaluru South, Bengaluru North, Bengaluru Central, Belagavi, Vijayapura, Davanagere, Dharwad, Haveri, Koppal, Shivamogga, Uttara Kannada, and Dakshina Kannada. The JD (S) has won Hassan consistently.

Having been reduced to one seat in the 2019 parliamentary polls, the Congress lost many of its "safe seats" that year. Before 2019, Kalaburagi, Kolar, Chamarajanagar, Chickballapur, besides Bengaluru Rural, the sole seat they won in 2019, were considered safe seats for the Congress. Chitradurga, Mandya, Raichur, Bidar, Chikkodi, Mysuru-Kodagu, and Tumakuru seats "are swing seats" that have often altered the seat tally of the parties.

While this clearly shows that the BJP begins the ongoing Lok Sabha polls campaign with an advantage, psephologists and political experts warn that every election is different.

"The very fact that BJP has entered into a pre-poll alliance with the JD(S) shows that they have conceded that the party in Karnataka is not as strong as in 2019 when they won a historic 25 seats. While Congress is on the upswing, it needs to be seen whether they will break the jinx and win double digits seats in the State for the first time after 1999," said political analyst A. Narayana, who teaches at School of Policy and Governance, Azim Premji University.

Political scientist Sandeep Shastri of Lokniti Network said every election is different and the BJP has secured more seats in successive Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka for a host of circumstantial reasons, and hence, it would be wrong to assume the same trend would continue.

"In 2004, the Lok Sabha and Vidhana Sabha elections were held together and the people of Karnataka rejected the Congress in both. The BJP emerged big on the State's scene for the first time then. The 2009 Lok Sabha elections were held after the BJP came to power for the first time in the State, giving the party an advantage. From 2014, it has been helped by the 'Modi factor', which was the highest in 2014. Six out of 10 voters who voted for the BJP said they voted for Mr. Modi, highest for any State in 2014, as per the Lok Neeti-CSDS survey back then. But this has seen a slight decline since then," he explained.

Mr. Narayana also said that ever since the BJP came to power in Delhi in the 1990s, the party has taken Lok Sabha elections more seriously, even as there seems to have been a lackadaisical approach in the Congress over Lok Sabha polls.

Congress then and now

"The Congress, which lacks a strong central leadership, unlike the BJP, seems to be fighting the Lok Sabha polls as a sum of the strength of their MLAs even when Congress-led United Progressive Alliance was in power for a decade. Many times, especially when the wind seems against them, MLAs do not invest themselves fully in Lok Sabha polls and the party has failed to hold them accountable as well in the State," he said. He added, however, that the Congress seems to be fighting the current polls with more cohesiveness, strategy, and ambition than the last few polls.

Constituency	Winner	Constituency	Winner
Bagalkot	BJP since 2004	Davangere	BJP since 1999
Bengaluru Central	BJP since 2009	Dharwad	BJP since 1996
Bengaluru North	BJP since 2004	Kalaburagi	1998 - BJP, 1999 - 2014 - Cong. 2019 - BJP
Bengaluru South	BJP since 1991	Hassan	JD (S) from 1991 except in 1999 when Cong. won
Bengaluru Rural	Cong. since 2013 bypoll	Haveri	BJP since 2004, Cong. all times before that
Belagavi	BJP since 2004	Kolar	1980 - 2014 - Cong. 2019 - BJP
Ballari	BJP since 2004, except in 2018 bypolls	Koppal	1998 - 2004 - Cong. 2009 - 2019 - BJP
Bidar	1991- 2004 - BJP 2004 - 2009 -Cong. 2014 - 2019 - BJP	Mandya	Swinging between Cong. and JD (S) from 1984
Vijayapura	BJP since 1999	Mysuru	Swinging between Cong. and BJP between 1998 and 2014, 2014 - 2019 - BJP
Chamarajanagar	1996 - 2004 - JD (S) 2009 - 2014 - Cong. 2019 - BJP	Raichur	Swinging between BJP and Cong. since 1998
Chickballapur	1998 - 2014 - Cong. 2019 - BJP	Shivamogga	BJP from 2009
Chikkodi	1998, 1999 - JD (S) 2004 -09 - BJP, 2014 - Cong. 2019 - BJP	Tumakuru	From 1998, BJP has won 4 times and Cong. 2 times
Chitradurga	Swinging between BJP and Cong. from 2004	Udupi-Chikkamagaluru	2009 - BJP, 2012 bypolls - Cong., 2014 - 2019 - BJP
Dakshina Kannada	BJP since 1991	Uttara Kannada	BJP since 1996 except in 1999

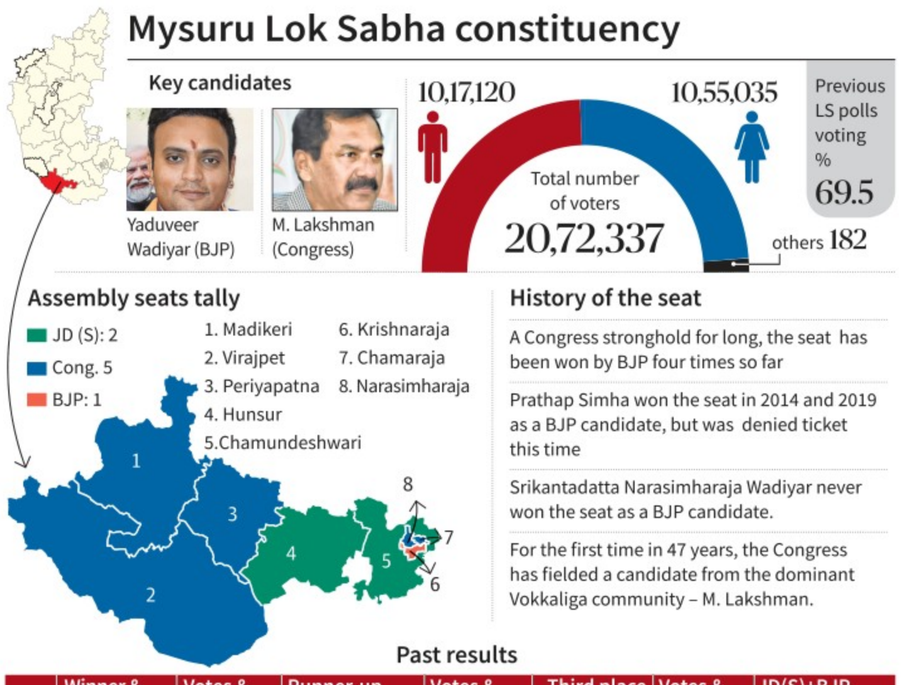
Royalty vs loyal party worker in city of palaces

Laiqh A. Khan
MYSURU

After winning the Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency during the last two consecutive elections in 2014 and 2019, the BJP leadership decided against fielding its incumbent MP Prathap Simha and instead chose the scion of the erstwhile Mysuru royal family Yaduveer Srikantadatta Narasimharaja Wadiyar as its candidate for the constituency in a surprise move.

Even though the exact reason for the BJP replacing Mr. Simha, a Vokkaliga, with Mr. Yaduveer has not been made public, the Congress party, which had been considering a proposal to field a person belonging to the dominant Vokkaliga community in the constituency, opted for M. Lakshman, familiar to the people of Mysuru first as a social activist and later as a Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) spokesperson.

Mr. Yaduveer's entry into the fray marks the erstwhile royal family of Mysuru's return to electoral politics after a gap of two decades. Late scion Srikantadatta Narasimharaja Wadiyar, a four-time MP, had contested the elections to Mysuru Lok Sabha on six occasions, of which five were as a Congress candidate. The only time he contested as a BJP candidate in 1991, Mr. Wadiyar was routed by Congress candidate Chandraprabha Urs.



Past results

	Winner & party	Votes & vote share	Runner-up & party	Votes & vote share	Third place	Votes & vote share	JD(S)+BJP Votes & vote share
2019	Prathap Simha (BJP)	6,88,974 **52.27%**	A.H. Vishwanath (Congress)	5,50,327 **41.75%**	D.B. Chandra (BSP)	24,597 **1.87%**	
2014	Prathap Simha (BJP)	5,03,908 **29.25%**	A.H. Vishwanath (Congress)	4,72,300 **27.41%**	Chandrashekariah (JD-S)	1,38,587 **8.04%**	6,10,887 **37.29%**

However, Mr. Yaduveer has chosen to don the saffron colours at a time when the BJP has not only held the constituency, but also formed the government at the Centre for the last two terms.

The elections to Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency will also be seen as a prestige battle for Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Even though his home constituency Varuna falls in the adjoining Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha constituency, the stakes will remain high for the Chief Minister as Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency comprises six Assembly segments of his home district Mysuru while the remaining two Assembly segments are in the neighbouring Kodagu district.

Mr. Siddaramaiah, who has already campaigned twice in the constituency while admitting leaders from the BJP and the JD(S) into the party fold, is expected to return again for electioneering again despite his busy schedule in the rest of the State.

Meanwhile, 32-year-old Yaduveer, the great grandson of the last Maharaja of Mysore Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, who had been adopted by Pramoda Devi Wadiyar as the royal heir during a ceremony in Mysuru palace in February 2015, keeps referring to the development initiatives taken up in the princely state of Mysore by the erstwhile Maharajas. During his election campaign meetings, he promises to make his own contribution to the people of the region in the present-day democratic set-up.

Though he said he was participating in public activities since the last nine years, Mr. Yaduveer said he realised that policy changes in society can be brought about only through political means and hence the electoral plunge.

Meanwhile, the Congress is seeking to counter the "royal aura" of the BJP candidate by highlighting not only their choice of a loyal party worker, the guarantee schemes of the Congress government and Mr. Siddaramaiah's popularity in the region, but also playing the caste card.

With Vokkaliga voters expected to play a key role in the outcome of the polls, Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar chose to address the candidate as "Lakshman Gowda" at a public event while Mr. Siddaramaiah decried the efforts made by the candidate's adversaries to question his Vokkaliga roots. Mr. Lakshman has made it clear that he was seeking votes on the plank of development and would elicit support of all castes, including Vokkaligas.

It remains to be seen whether the Congress can stop the BJP from registering a "hat trick" victory in Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency or Mr. Yaduveer can stretch the saffron party's winning streak in Mysuru to another term.

BSY expresses anger at DKS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The remarks of Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D. K. Shivakumar that Adichunchanagiri mutt seer Nirmalanandanatha swami should have questioned the BJP leaders about the propriety of bringing down the erstwhile government, led by Vokkaliga leader H.D. Kumaraswamy, has attracted the wrath of veteran BJP leader B. S. Yediyurappa.

Mr. Yediyurappa had formed the BJP government after the collapse of the JD(S)-Congress coalition government led by H. D. Kumaraswamy.

"Mr. Shivakumar himself could directly ask this question to the seer instead of telling others," Mr. Yediyurappa told mediapersons in Bengaluru on April 11.

Hinting that Mr. Shivakumar is trying to woo Vokkaliga votes through such remarks, Mr. Yediyurappa asserted, "I want to tell Mr. Shivakumar that all the communities, including Vokkaligas, are not only united, but are firmly standing with us. They will not come to your fold."

With the Lok Sabha elections are approaching, the two prominent Vokkaliga leaders – Mr. Shivakumar and Mr. Kumaraswamy – appear to be intensely competing with each other in wooing the Vokkaliga community.

Deepti Sharma — the jack of all trades seeking to master the game

With an eagerness to improve and the skillset to dominate the world, the all-rounder's journey across formats brings great hope to her UP Warriorz mentor Lisa Sthalekar

LAVANYA LAKSHMINARAYANAN

Lavanya Lakshminarayanan
PUNE

It's not easy being captain. More so in a tournament final. You are tasked with motivating 11 nervous (in varying degrees) players while also reassuring the nagging doubts in your head as you set about seeking glory. Deepti Sharma's heart rate must have been in its upper limits on Thursday morning as she stepped out with teammate Uma Chetry with 153 runs left for her side - East Zone - to chase vs South Zone in the Inter Zonal red-ball tournament.

Deepti has been a source of calm for East in the three games played during this tournament. What she missed out on during the Women's Premier League - dominating bowling charts - she more than made up for here with 27 scalps to her name, imperiously ahead of the rest of the field. She has been crucial with the bat too, helping bring stability to an inexperienced batting order that is still learning the demands of long format cricket. Her side eventually finished with a memorable one-wicket win.

"I texted Deepti before her final to wish her luck saying 'I think she's enjoying the format,' Lisa Sthalekar, Deepti's team mentor at WPL outfit UP Warriorz tells Sportstar. "Deepti replied saying, "I think it's my favourite format." Yeah, she is pretty good at it to be honest."

Identity crisis

The 26-year-old barely betrays emotions. Extremes may be curdling her nerves within but there's no sign of it on the exterior. And so, a slight identity crisis that she's been unravelling in the pursuit of a solution slips under the radar with the discourse often stuck at adaptability and form. Change, to an observer, may be easy and even expected, but the one going through it will tell you of the seismic shifts it entails. Deepti faced a predicament of the sort which ate into her first season in the WPL. She was still trying to figure her essence as an allrounder, particularly in the T20 game, when all her skills were pointing to finesse in the longer formats of the game. This often comes down to a matter of confidence and mindset. Deepti was no different.

"I remember speaking to her during the first edition and telling her that she should be dominating this competition. This is a competition built for all rounders and out of the big names in Indian women's cricket, she is THE allrounder, so she should dominate," Lisa remembers.

"The changes she made were evident. In one of the earlier games this season, she looked to loft the ball over mid off instead of sweeping but got caught. I remember speaking to her after the match and telling her how that was the right call, even if it resulted in a wicket. The execution wasn't there but we needed that change. Everyone knows she's going to sweep. So she's got to show people she's got other things. She eventually went on to have a wonderful tournament. She was literally carrying the team by herself in some stages," the former Australian captain beams.

"Her ability to hit straight sixes just shows how adaptable and clever she is. She reads the game very well. We've known that with her bowling, but she managed to get that into her batting too.

Not only did she have a scintillating run with the bat, finishing as the fifth highest run scorer with 295 runs (she even held the Orange Cap for a while), she was able to improve her strike-rate from 83.33 in season one to an impressive 136.57 this time. That's no easy jump. Her highest score rose between editions from 22 to an unbeaten 88. She managed only 11 boundaries last time, but registered 34 boundaries and eight sixes this time around. It was almost like watching a whole new player for some parts of the season.

This mental muddle she left behind could also be because of how starkly opposite her playing roles are at the domestic and international levels. Deepti enjoys batting up the order and even opens for her state and zonal sides. In the Indian setup, she is preferred lower down, with faith wrested in her ability to clear the ropes. It hasn't always worked, but WPL 2024 certainly cleared a bit of the fog up for her. A month or so later, Deepti was able to switch back to 'Test' mode in the Inter Zonals, with the ability to grind out an innings, wear down an opposition and defend till the end of time.

"I think she has time on her hand. She knows her game and her strengths intimately. She can leave balls that aren't in her area and she's got time and patience. She doesn't care if you've set a field to trap her on the off side and you've opened the leg side field. She'll keep leaving and defending till the ball is there to be played. She doesn't get flustered," Lisa explains in her assessment of Deepti's red ball comfort.

"She opens domestically, but in the Indian side, she has been slotted lower and lower which reduces the time she has and now your game is being dictated by the situation and that didn't quite sit with who she was as a player. Maybe that drove her systems to push her a bit. We did so too. We assured her that she had all the shots and just wanted her to play them. One thing she said after the first couple of games was, 'Put me higher, I'll get the job done.' And obviously, when things were not working for us, we pushed her up and she did really well. That takes a lot of courage and self belief to be able to deliver and she did it in spades through the season. We were all so happy. Within our team, we had a player of the tournament pick and she won it hands down," she adds.

Always room to learn

With the ball, even though Deepti finished with nine wickets in as many games in the WPL last season, there were patches where she was getting smashed for runs, particularly sixes. She conceded a total of 309 runs in 209 balls last season and improved that to 217 runs off 180 balls this year. She even became the first Indian to register a hattrick in the tournament's nascent history.

"I usually score the game as I watch it like I would during my playing days and so I looked through my sheets and then sat her down and said, 'You're a much better player than this. I get it that the pitch is good, the batters are strong and the boundaries are strong, but you're better than getting whacked for most sixes in our team,'" Lisa recollects.

Tightening her technique and keeping things simple with line and length along with her general tactical acuity in the game have helped Deepti immensely with the ball.

There also is a learning curve when it comes to handling high pressure situations in a chase that boils down to the lower order that Indian cricket has grappled with for the better part of the decade. In the Inter Zonals, a lack of communication left Deepti and Richa Ghosh, her East batting partner, on the same side. It was a simple run out for South to effect as Richa tried to put on a stoic mask over what was quite clearly boiling rage below. That run out shook up the skipper a bit. The unforced risk-taking began creeping in, runs were a bit nervy, she was reacting rather than taking command even of communication with her partner. Eventually, Deepti was dismissed, courtesy a sweep shot that the opposition saw coming from a mile away with a considerable part of the target yet to be shaved off.

"I feel like the Indians are very emotional players," Lisa chimes in. "I look at players like Meg Lanning and Alyssa Healy or even someone like Pat Cummins as captain... Jaydev Unadkat is being belted for runs and he comes along smiling saying, 'It's alright mate, what's your plan? We'll set the field accordingly.' You know when you're on top of the game is when Indian players start having words, not at you, but at each other almost. It's not to say it's a bad thing or a good thing. It's just there and it sets them apart from the others. Maybe for some, it gets under their skin and they tend to focus on it or it may rile them up. It can work both ways," she adds.

Evolution as a leader

While she works on staying ahead of the pack with bat and ball, her biggest task was to lead a patched up side on short notice to victory in a tournament held over two and half weeks in the gruelling dry heat in Pune. Across three games, Deepti's 27 wickets (including three five-plus wicket hauls) and 157 runs, sometimes in key situations which helped steady the East ship, were not her only contributions. Her leadership was tested against spirited opponents like North and South Zone and she emerged with the biggest seal of success there is, a trophy.

While Deepti's experience and seniority in the domestic circuit has seen her take on leadership roles before, the WPL helped her level those skills up in a more competitive pool. She found an ally in fierce international rival Alyssa Healy who she was deputy to in UPW.

"Alyssa and Deepti's relationship... When an Indian player was coming on or a domestic player unseen in the international scene, there was a smooth information sharing between the two and even from people like Rajeshwari Gayakwad and Gouher Sultana about their scoring areas and potential spaces for us to use. So that trust was there. We had a senior leadership group that would get together before every match day. Information would be shared and Deepti was the only Indian in that group but she was very comfortable in sharing her thoughts. It's only now that they're getting to play with people they disliked as rivals. There was a time when Deepti, Alyssa and the senior players were all trying to figure out... 'okay where do we all sit? How much do we trust one another?' You're bringing different walks of life together and trying to get them to click. This year, it was different, it was like a family coming together," Lisa explains.

That metaphorical trust fall has helped Deepti take help, heed advice which she is quick to act on and move away from a certain rigidity that was associated with her.

To have a player of her calibre sharpening the prongs of her trident so imperiously in a World Cup year can only be a good sign for India. Much like Lisa and Co. urge Deepti to do for their franchise, it's up to her to go out there and finish the job!

THE GIST

- Deepti Sharma led East Zone to the championship triumph in the Senior Women's inter-zonal multi-day trophy — the domestic red ball tournament making its comeback in the Indian ecosystem after six years
- She took 27 wickets and scored 157 runs over three matches. She finished with the Player of the Series Award
- This comes after a successful WPL with the bat which saw her finish with the Most Valuable Player Award with 295 runs and 10 wickets to her name in eight games
- In the Senior Women's T20 Trophy late last year, Deepti finished as the tournament's fourth highest run scorer with 280 runs in nine games innings, striking at 105.66. Her improved strike rate in the WPL (136.57) involved a lot of mind work and power hitting drills
- In the one-off Test against England, Deepti was adjudged player of the match for her scores of 67, 20 and bowling figures of 5/7 and 4/32 which helped orchestrate a 347-run thrashing of the visitor. In the lone Test against Australia, Deepti scored a 171-ball 78 and took two wickets in India's eight-wicket win

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Id-ul-Fitr

Muslims pray on Id, marking the end of the holy month of Ramzan, at Chamarajpet playground, in Bengaluru on Thursday. K. MURALI KUMAR

BMTC set to introduce AC electric bus

Darshan Devaiah B.P.
BENGALURU

Bengaluru Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) is preparing to introduce air-conditioned electric buses to its fleet. OHM Global Mobility, a subsidiary of Ashok Leyland, will supply 320 such buses to the BMTC.

In addition, BMTC plans to replace old Volvo buses operating on Vajra and Vayu Vajra airport routes with air-conditioned electric buses. Officials said that BMTC recently awarded OHM Global Mobility the contract to operate air-conditioned electric buses on a Gross Cost Contract (lease model).

The corporation plans to replace old Volvo buses operating on Vajra and Vayu Vajra airport routes with air-conditioned electric buses.

"OHM will operate air-conditioned electric buses on a Gross Cost Contract (GCC) model, with BMTC paying them ₹65.8 per km. The prototype bus is expected to arrive in Bengaluru in three months, with the firm set to deliver all buses by March 2025. Currently, BMTC operates non-AC electric buses," an official said. BMTC's new fleet of 320 low-floor AC electric buses will be 13 metres long. They are designed to be disabled-friendly. They will have retractable ramps. Each bus will have to run 250 km per day for 365 days, totaling 87,500 km annually.

BMTC has selected four depots – Depot 7 (Subhash Nagar), Depot 13 (Katriguppe), Depot 18 (Whitefield), and Depot 25 (HSR Layout) – for the deployment of these 320 electric AC buses. Currently, BMTC operates 593 Volvo AC buses, with 474 daily schedules covering Vajra and Vayu Vajra routes. In terms of electric buses, BMTC operates 300 Ashok Leyland Switch Mobility e-buses, 213 e-buses from Tata Motors, and 90 JBM-NTPC e-buses, all non-AC.

Of the 6,147 buses in the fleet, 5,643 are diesel-powered, and 503 are electric. The non-AC electric bus fleet is made up of 90 Midi 9-metre buses, 300 12-metre buses, and 113 low-floor 12-metre buses.

KSTDC accepting bookings for customised tour packages

With its wide network of hotels and fleet of vehicles, the corporation has always been the go-to option for group tours

Jahnavi T. R.
BENGALURU

Gone are the days when a tour booked through Karnataka State Tourism Development Corporation (KSTDC) meant pre-determined routes, destinations, and duration. To cater to the more dynamic needs of travellers, the KSTDC has recently introduced customised tours where travellers can have a more flexible itinerary.

With its wide network of hotels across south India and a fleet of vehicles, the KSTDC has always been the go-to option for group tours. The corporation will use the same resources to provide customised experiences for tourists, anywhere across south India.

Help with planning

Although there is no fixed number of seats required for these customised packages, KSTDC expects enough people to at least fill a car, an official revealed. "The objective of these customised tours is to help families and other groups who cannot plan their travel itineraries. They can choose where they want to go and for how many days, and we will plan accordingly. We will also provide them with our verified vehicles, drivers and even guides," said Jagadeesha G., MD, KSTDC.

Good hotels

The customised packages will include accommodation options. While KSTDC's own hotels will be on the itinerary, at places where the KSTDC does not have a hotel, good quality hotels will be booked depending on the travellers' budget.

"When compared with packages offered by private tour operators, the big difference is in the prices. Our packages are cheaper. As a government organisation, the safety and security of travellers is our priority. Along with best quality hotels and drivers, our guides are also more knowledgeable and experienced," Mr. Jagadeesha explained.

Popular destinations

Though introduced a few months earlier, the KSTDC is now in the process of popularising customised packages as summer vacations are when most people travel. As of now, the KSTDC is averaging two bookings every month for its customised packages, an official said. Mysuru, Madikeri, and Ooty are the preferred destinations for these trips.

"In December, tourists booked two buses to Shivagiri. In another booking, 86 tourists had opted for a visit to Madikeri," Mr. Jagadeesha said. "Customers range from families to corporates, Central Government employees and employees of other State governments," he added.

THE HINDU GROUP

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INBRIEF

7 injured in clashes between YSRCP, TDP activists in A.P.

Seven persons, including two women, suffered injuries when activists of the YSR Congress Party (YSRCP) and the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) clashed in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. Trouble broke out when supporters of TDP leader Damacherla Janardhan alleged that a ward volunteer campaigned for YSRCP's Balineni Srinivas Reddy at Samatha Nagar, on Wednesday night. The injured were hospitalised. The police said the situation was under control.

Constable shoots himself dead in Visakhapatnam

A 30-year-old Special Protection Force (SPF) constable, on security duty at a bank in Visakhapatnam, shot himself dead on Thursday morning. He was identified as P. Shankara Rao, from Srikakulam district. The Dwarakanagar police said Mr. Rao shot himself in the chest with his SLR rifle around 7 a.m. Fellow security personnel rushed him to hospital, where he was declared dead. (People battling suicidal thoughts are urged to call 100 for counselling.)

Kerala HC modifies EC order, allows Ramzan, Vishu fairs

The Kerala High Court on Thursday modified the Election Commission's circular barring the State government from taking action on the proposal of the Kerala State Cooperatives Consumers' Federation (Consumerfed) to conduct Ramzan and Vishu fairs. Justice Devan Ramachandran, while allowing the plea of Consumerfed against the Election Commission's order, however, ordered that no publicity be attached to the fairs as being government-sponsored programmes.

Kerala High Court upholds Congress MLA's 2021 election

LDF candidate who contested the polls from Thripunithura alleged that his rival sought votes on religious grounds by distributing slips during the campaign seeking votes for 'Lord Ayyappan'

The Hindu Bureau
KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Thursday dismissed an election petition filed by Communist Party of India (Marxist) [CPI(M)] leader M. Swaraj seeking to declare the election of Congress candidate K. Babu from the Thripunithura Assembly seat in 2021 null and void on the allegation that his rival candidate had canvassed votes on religious grounds.

Justice P.G. Ajithkumar observed that the petitioner had failed to prove beyond doubt that his rival candidate had committed corrupt practice as alleged.

Fair election: Thripunithura MLA K. Babu contended neither he nor his agents had distributed such slips. PTI

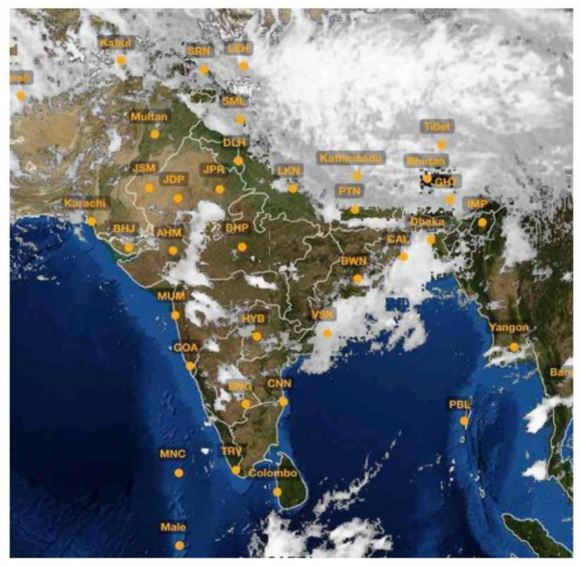
Mr. Swaraj alleged that Mr. Babu's election agents had distributed election slips with wording *"Ningalude vote Ayyappanu"* (Your vote is for Lord Ayyappan) and a picture of Ayyappa with the the election symbol of Mr. Babu with a request to vote for the United Democratic Front candidate. He contended that they thereby appealed for vote using religious symbol to further the prospects of Mr. Babu in the election. Therefore, the election was vitiated by corrupt practices under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act.

'Baseless petition'

Mr. Babu argued that neither he nor his election agent nor any other person with their consent had printed or distributed such slips to the voters. The petition was filed without any basis and the grounds were untenable. The allegation of Mr. Swaraj that his election agents had appealed to the public to vote for him as he had stood with the believers of Ayyappa was incorrect. Those were creations of the petitioner, he said.

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Friday: Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Ladakh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, central Maharashtra, interior Karnataka, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry, Kerala, Mahe and Lakshadweep

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	36.0	22.1	Kozhikode	—	38.0	29.6
Ahmedabad	—	38.5	27.3	Kurnool	—	40.6	27.7
Aizawl	—	34.0	16.1	Lucknow	—	39.8	20.8
Allahabad	—	40.6	22.9	Madurai	—	38.4	26.5
Bengaluru	—	35.8	21.6	Mangaluru	—	35.6	26.1
Bhopal	30	31.2	19.0	Mumbai	—	33.6	24.4
Bhubaneswar	—	30.2	24.4	Mysuru	—	36.0	21.0
Chandigarh	—	36.9	20.3	New Delhi	—	39.0	19.6
Chennai	—	36.0	26.1	Patna	—	38.0	25.1
Coimbatore	—	37.4	25.4	Port Blair	—	33.3	27.3
Dehradun	—	34.7	17.5	Puducherry	—	35.2	26.6
Gangtok	4	21.0	12.9	Pune	—	39.5	23.0
Goa	—	33.6	25.0	Raipur	6.6	32.0	19.6
Guwahati	2	32.8	20.4	Ranchi	4	28.6	18.9
Hubballi	—	38.0	24.0	Shillong	—	25.6	13.5
Hyderabad	—	35.6	25.2	Shimla	—	26.3	14.4
Imphal	—	32.5	11.7	Srinagar	—	21.2	8.9
Jaipur	—	38.4	23.6	Thiruvananthapuram	—	36.3	26.1
Kochi	25	34.0	27.0	Tiruchi	—	38.1	26.0
Kohima	—	25.0	13.8	Vijayawada	—	37.2	27.6
Kolkata	—	32.6	24.1	Visakhapatnam	—	36.3	26.2

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.12	..92	.27	...203	...147	
Bengaluru	.10	..17	.23	71	90	
Chennai	.16	8	.95	59	60	
Delhi	.37	107	103	...236	...331	
Hyderabad	...3	..31	.38	49	...112	
Kolkata	.26	6	.82	...160	...146	
Lucknow	.11	..61	.23	78	...126	
Mumbai	..—	..33	.36	...177	91	
Pune	.90	110	114	94	87	
Visakhapatnam	.20	..37	.26	86	...118	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Byrnihat, Assam recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 318 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 29

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

15 children survive shock during chariot procession

The Hindu Bureau
KURNOOL

Fifteen children, all aged between 8 and 15, had a narrow escape after suffering an electric shock during the chariot procession at a local temple in Kurnool district on Thursday.

The power supply to the snapped cable was immediately cut off. The children, who suffered minor burns, were taken to the Kurnool GGH.

Kerala BJP president seeks name change for Sulthan Bathery

The Hindu Bureau
KOZHIKODE

BJP's Kerala unit chief K. Surendran, also the NDA candidate for the Wayanad Lok Sabha seat, has waded into a controversy by declaring that, if elected, his first priority will be to change the name of Sulthan Bathery town in the district to 'Ganapathi Vattam'.

The power to change the name of a city or a place rests with the States.

Sulthan Bathery reportedly got its name after Mysore ruler Tipu Sultan stocked his artillery battery in a temple in the area.

At a press meet on Thursday, Mr. Surendran reiterated that the place had been called Ganapathi Vattam for long. "When did Tipu Sultan come here? That place has been there even before. There is a temple dedicated to Lord Ganapati there. We call it Ganapathi Vattam."

CBI arrests Kavitha in Delhi excise policy case

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The CBI on Thursday arrested Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) MLC K. Kavitha in the Delhi excise policy case. It is alleged that she was part of a 'South Group' which paid ₹100 crore in advance as "kickbacks" through AAP's media incharge Vijay Nair.

The CBI had filed the case in 2022 against Manish Sisodia and 14 others.

Judge in Riyas Maulavi murder case transferred

The Hindu Bureau
KASARAGOD

Kasaragod District Principal Sessions Judge K.K. Balakrishnan, who presided over the sensational Mohammed Riyas Maulavi murder case, has been transferred to Alappuzha district. District Judge and High Court IT division Registrar G. Gopakumar is the new District Principal Sessions Judge of Kasaragod. Mr. Balakrishnan had taken charge as Principal Sessions Judge of Kasaragod in August 2023.

Scotching rumours, authorities said the transfer was "unrelated" to the recent verdict, adding that Mr. Balakrishnan had applied for re-location prior to the case's conclusion.

The verdict, delivered on March 30, had created a furore as the court acquitted the three accused, Ajesh, Nitin Kumar, and Akhilesh, all residents within the Kasaragod police station limits, in the murder of Riyas Moulavi, a madrasa teacher. Political figures and the public had expressed outrage, alleging miscarriage of justice.

Various stakeholders asserted that justice was not served even seven years after the heinous crime.

Saida, wife of Riyas Maulavi, broke down upon hearing the verdict.

The court rebuked the investigation team and the prosecution for their failure to establish the accused's alleged affiliation with RSS. It also criticised the "quality and one-sided nature" of the investigation, with the court highlighting missed opportunities in uncovering Maulavi's connections prior to his demise.

Crumbling heritage

Facing the hammer: A dilapidated building in the Osmania General Hospital in Hyderabad on Thursday. The Telangana government proposes to demolish all old buildings, including the historic Nizam-era heritage block, to make way for a modern hospital. NAGARA GOPAL

Cong. keeping even Speaker's office under its control: BRS

The Hindu Bureau
HYDERABAD

The Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) has alleged that the Congress, which has come to power in the name of "democratic Telangana", is keeping all systems in the State under its control, including that of the Speaker's office.

"It is evident that the Speaker is not giving them an appointment to meet him in spite of repeated requests, though the Speaker is expected to be unbiased at least in this basic aspect," said BRS MLAs K.P. Vivekanand, Padi Kaushik Reddy and Kova Laxmi and former MLAs A. Jeevan Reddy and P. Shashidhar Reddy.

Addressing a press conference here on Thursday, they said that the Congress government, particularly Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, was acting against what they had spoken before coming to the power.

They said they had been trying to meet the Speaker for the last few weeks to petition him against the defection of party MLAs Kadiyam Srihari and Tellam Venkat Rao seeking their disqualification.

But, as the Speaker did not give them an appointment even after repeated attempts, they had sent the petitions to his office in a registered post.

There is no other option for the Speaker but to disqualify Danam Nagender, Kadiyam Srihari and Tellam Venkat Rao as their action was attracting the provisions of Anti-Defection Law, they said.

They pointed out that the Congress Speaker in Himachal Pradesh had disqualified the MLAs who had defected to the BJP, and now, it was the turn of the Telangana Speaker to emulate his Himachal Pradesh counterpart.

BRS would go to any extent possible legally on the issue in case the Speaker failed to act upon their petitions.

They would stage protests in front of the Assembly and also knock the doors of courts.

Ridiculing the Congress manifesto, they said that Rahul Gandhi was preaching morals but Mr. Revanth Reddy was digging graves.

Country's secular fabric must prevail: Kanthapuram

Abdul Latheef Naha
MALAPPURAM

Kanthapuram A.P. Aboobacker Musliar, arguably the topmost influential Muslim leader in Kerala, is back to normal life after having suffered a brain stroke in October 2022. All India Sunni Jamiyyathul Ulama general secretary and Kerala Muslim Jamat president, the 83-year-old scholar is deferentially referred to as Ustad by his followers and eponymously known to others after his native village Kanthapuram.

Mr. Kanthapuram spoke to *The Hindu* from his Markaz office at Karanthur, Kozhikode, about the importance of upholding communal harmony and the secular fabric as the nation is going to the polls in separate phases.

Kanthapuram A.P. Aboobacker Musliar

'Well-being of India'

"The secular fabric of the country should stand. Insha Allah, I shall poll my vote at Kanthapuram. And people should vote for those who work for the well-being of India," he said in a subdued voice, sitting in a wheelchair. His words were clear, but they lacked the sonority that his speeches are famous for.

Although Muslims ruled India for about 800 years, they never tried to convert it into a Muslim nation. "They could have if they wanted, but they never did largely because of the fatwas (religious decrees) of the scholars of that time," he said, adding that rulers should not be partisan.

Mr. Kanthapuram, who met Prime Minister Narendra Modi three times in the last 10 years, hoped that Mr. Modi might be aware that he would not be able to rule a country like India for long by discriminating religiously. "India does not belong to any one particular cast or community. It belongs to all: Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh and others."

No specific support

Mr. Kanthapuram said he would not support any political front in the election for the reason that they do not want problems in mosques and mahals where his men work.

"People are free to vote according to their conscience and circumstances," he said.

However, deviating from his past electoral stand by offering "help to those who helped them", Mr. Kanthapuram said this time they would help those who "are willing to work for the well-being of India."

He agreed that there was a time when he displayed a leaning towards the Left when the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) opposed him.

"But that situation has changed. We do not have any animosity towards the Indian Union Muslim League."

It was in 1989 that a section of Sunni scholars led by Mr. Kanthapuram walked away from the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama following differences and formed a body of their own by the same name. "It was a question of sticking to the original Sunni ideology. We are the original," he said, justifying his group celebrating the centenary of the Samastha.

Sunni movement

According to him, the 1989 split helped the growth and development of the Sunni movement in Kerala. "If unity is good for the community, then let there be a reunion," he said. He agreed that both Samastha groups had started showing mutually acceptable overtures.

Fire destroys nearly 100 hectares of Wayanad sanctuary

The Hindu Bureau
KALPETTA

Close to 100 hectares of forest were destroyed in a fire in the Sulthan Bathery forest range under the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Kerala on Thursday.

The incident was reported around 10.30 a.m. at Karassery in the district. It later spread to Kumbram Kolly, Ezhekkar, Narikkolly and Kottanode areas of the forest under the sanctuary, sources said.

Six-hour effort

Three units of Fire and Rescue Services rushed to the spot upon being alerted by residents. As many as 150 persons, including employees of the forest and fire services departments as well as local people, took nearly six hours to douse the flames, P. Nidheesh Kumar, Fire and Rescue Services Station officer, Sulthan Bathery, said. "We brought the fire under control by pumping water and using manual fire beaters," he said.

This was the fourth fire incident in the sanctuary this year. Mr. Kumar said dried bamboo pods, high temperature due to the absence of summer rain and heavy wind caused the fire to spread rapidly. The fire also affected a rubber plantation near the sanctuary.

Crafted at home, NexCAR19 takes India to next level in cancer care

Chimeric Antigen Receptor T cell therapy involves genetically modifying a patient's T cells to fight against malignant tumor cells. T cells are a type of white blood cell developed from the stem cells in the bone marrow and are a vital part of the immune system, defending the body against infections

Soujanya Padikkal

It is 2015. Alka Dwivedi, is striving to develop patient-focused therapy for cancer. This leads her to join Rahul Purwar, a Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology Bombay (IIT-B), who is working on developing affordable CAR-T cell therapy in India.

Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T cell therapy involves genetically modifying a patient's T cells to fight malignant tumor cells. T cells are a type of white blood cell developed from the stem cells in the bone marrow and are a vital part of the immune system, defending the body against infections.

Dr. Purwar returned to India in 2013 after completing his post-doctoral programme at Harvard Medical School and realised that India lagged behind the West in CAR-T research. The U.S. was already working on it by then, and in 2017, it had approved the first commercial CAR-T cell therapy, which cost anywhere between ₹3 and 4 crore, excluding hospitalisation to treat side effects, rendering it unaffordable to middle and low-income countries, including India.

He was driven by a vision to provide accessible treatment to Indians. It took 10 years to flesh out his vision in research that included his students Alka Dwivedi and Atharva Karulkar. "When I saw what he was doing, I decided to give it my 100% to make it successful," says Dr. Dwivedi, the former doctoral student who now works at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Bethesda, Maryland.

He would soon be joined by Gaurav Narula and Hasmukh Jain, haemato-oncologists from Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), Mumbai, who spearheaded the clinical trial phases of NexCAR19. "We were just getting to know that [CAR-T therapy] is something that is going to potentially change the treatment paradigm," said Dr. Jain.

The National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland. AFP

How are CAR-T cells made?

T-cells (a type of white blood cell) are collected from the patient through a process called leukapheresis. They are then modified in the lab to express proteins called chimeric antigen receptors (CARs) on their surface. The gene responsible for encoding CAR is developed synthetically in the lab, and a vector acts as a vehicle to deliver CAR into the patient's T-cell. Commonly, viral vectors, such as lentiviral vectors, are used, as seen in NexCAR19. The re-engineered T cells are then multiplied by millions in the lab and sent back to the hospital, where they are infused into the patient. The patient usually undergoes chemotherapy before receiving the CAR-T cells.

The CAR comprises several components that enable it to identify cancer cell antigens and stimulate an immune response. Each CAR spans across the cell membrane, with a portion extending outside the cell and a portion inside. The exterior segment is made of fragments of laboratory-generated antibodies selected for their affinity to bind to the targeted antigen. The internal segment of CAR consists of two components responsible for transmitting signalling once the receptor interacts with an antigen.

The FDA has approved six CAR-T cell therapies till now, and four of them target CD19, a protein produced on the surface of leukemia and lymphoma cells. NexCAR19 is similar in this aspect. A key difference between the CAR-T cell therapies developed in the U.S. and NexCAR19 lies in the composition of antibody fragments. While those developed in the US originate from murine (mice) sources, NexCAR19 has human proteins added to the mouse antibody, resulting in a 'humanised' CAR. This modification might have contributed to its reduced toxicity.

Collaboration with NCI

The researchers were trying to develop a therapy unexplored in India, and it was not an easy path. "We tried multiple times and had multiple failures and successes," says Dr. Dwivedi. "The process is very lengthy and requires skill. When I was trying, the process was not working."

Recognising the need for expertise, the team decided to seek help from the NCI and brought on board Nirali Shah, M.D., who collaborated with Dr. Jain and Dr. Narula on the clinical trial phase of the treatment. "They knew what they wanted to do and how to develop it in India for India," says Dr. Shah.

They visited NCI during a conference at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). The team met researchers at NCI who helped them troubleshoot and provided insights on protocol and the challenges they were facing. Upon returning to India, they implemented the suggestions provided, and it worked well. "NCI had a great impact on our development," says Dr. Dwivedi. The visit helped the team design an effective therapy. A smile spreads across her face as she reminisces about the day the CAR construct worked not only in vitro but also in mice.

> In October 2023 CDSCO approved the first CAR-T cell therapy to treat relapsed or refractory B-lymphomas and B-Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (B-ALL), where all other lines of treatment had failed

Clinical trial

After successfully developing CAR-T cell therapy, the team had to approach the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO) for clinical trial approval. "I think getting approval to conduct the study was a second critical milestone," says Dr. Shah.

On June 4, 2021, the first patient was treated at Tata Memorial Hospital, and the CAR-T therapy worked. "We were super happy that whatever we saw in the laboratory was working on the patient. It was a huge thing," says Dr. Dwivedi.

In October 2023, based on the data emerging from the clinical trial, CDSCO approved the first CAR-T cell therapy to treat relapsed or refractory B-lymphomas and B-Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (B-ALL), where all other lines of treatment had failed. Thus emerged a Made-in-India product, built by a team that persevered despite numerous challenges.

Risks of CAR-T therapy

While CAR-T therapy has shown remarkable progress in cases that looked hopeless, its efficacy varies from person to person, and it remains too early to declare it a complete cure. Moreover, it entails several side effects, the cytokine release syndrome (CRS) being the most common – an inflammatory response triggering immune system hyperactivity. Neurotoxicity is another common side effect but it wasn't observed in any early-stage clinical trial patients, potentially because of the 'humanised' antibody fragments used. Additionally, infections and low blood cell counts are other side effects doctors anticipate.

"We had to keep in mind that complications, which we may not be aware of now, might appear as you go along. That is something we have to be careful about," says Dr. Jain.

Despite the promise of CAR-T therapy, access to primary healthcare remains a challenge in many parts of India, with cancer treatment primarily concentrated in metropolitan areas. Given the therapy's side effects, proximity to a hospital is paramount.

As a clinician and scientist, Dr. Shah points out that her biggest worry with CAR-T cell implementation is managing its side effect profile linked to inflammation, particularly in cases requiring intensive care support, and the possibility of patients being heavily immunocompromised.

"You have to be really mindful when you try to adopt a therapy from one country to the next. You have to also think about the clinical parameters where this therapy is going to be implemented," says Dr. Shah

Relatively costly therapy

The project started with Dr. Purwar's dream of developing an affordable treatment. While NexCAR19 is priced at a fraction of its U.S. counterpart, it remains relatively high for many Indians, ranging from ₹40 to 45 lakh. "It's still one of the most expensive therapies that we have in the entire field of cancer therapy," says Dr. Jain. The manufacture of NexCAR19 involves multiple steps that affect its cost. Labour, logistics, materials, and facility expenses as well as marketing, distribution, and intellectual property development all play a role in pricing according to Shirish Arya, Co-founder and Director-Corporate Strategy and Business Development at ImmunoACT, a startup founded by Dr. Purwar and backed by Laurus Labs.

The good news, though, is the price can be further reduced. "We are working hard to increase access further", says Mr. Arya. "As purchasing power improves, scale up of manufacturing will help reduce cost of production". Also, the low toxicity means a patient doesn't have to bear the cost of hospitalisation.

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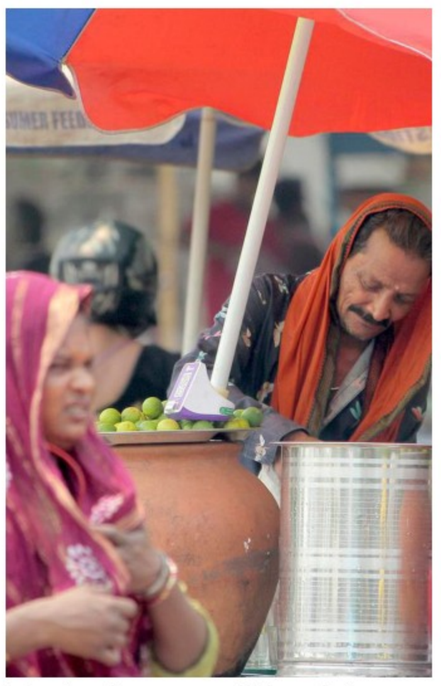

A street vendor prepares a drink on a hot afternoon in Bhubaneswar. Heat wave conditions are developing across the country as the summer takes hold. BISWARANJAN ROUT

'Hydration is key to beat the heat as mercury rises in summer'

R. Sujatha

Summer has just started, but several regions of the country have begun experiencing withering temperatures. Several towns in the south recorded over 40-degrees Celsius in late March, but other cities in the north of the country are inching towards that mark and further.

The Indian Meteorological Department has issued a warning that the heat could be "intense".

This week, the Tamil Nadu health department released an advisory urging people to remain hydrated by drinking plenty of water. "This will compensate for the loss of moisture through sweat," said T.S. Selvavinayagam, director of public health and preventive medicine. Pregnant women, the elderly, people with health conditions, and children on the list of those who should remain indoors have been advised to stay indoors between 11 a.m. and 3.30 p.m. They have also been told to wear loose-fitting, thin cotton clothes and footwear when stepping out.

The health department has advised people to consume tender coconut water, oral rehydration solution, lemon juice, buttermilk, and fruit juices. Seasonal fruits and vegetables and preference to home-cooked food are also mentioned. Aerated drinks, alcohol, and smoking are to be avoided

To stay hydrated, people should stock up on liquids. The health department has advised people to consume tender coconut water, oral rehydration solution, lemon juice, buttermilk, and fruit juices, but avoid aerated drinks, alcohol, and smoking. To beat the heat, eat seasonal fruits and vegetables and choose home-cooked food, advisories say.

Exposure to excessive heat could cause people to faint and lead to confusion and disorientation. People who experience these issues may require immediate medical attention. Dousing yourself with cold water will also reduce the impact of intense heat, the advisory states.

Street vendors, construction workers, those involved in the 100-day employment guarantee schemes, drivers and conductors in the public transport system, home delivery personnel, fire service, and traffic police should all take extra care since their work keeps them out during the day. They have been advised to carry a bottle of water. "People who feel overcome by these symptoms should consume ORS, as recommended by the World Health Organisation. It will help to replenish minerals such as sodium and potassium that the body loses through sweat," Dr. Selvavinayagam said.

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Progress in combating malnutrition remains 'sluggish'

Siddharth Kumar Singh

Malnutrition is a significant contributor to the disease burden in India. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have an ambitious target of eradicating malnutrition by 2030, prompting the World Health Organisation (WHO) to designate 2016-2025 as the decade of nutrition. Despite strides made in reducing undernutrition indicators through national nutrition programmes, progress in India has been sluggish. A study by the Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH) Hyderabad examined undernutrition across the nation and evaluated the distribution of nutritional indicators among children under three at the state level, utilising data from the National Family Health Surveys (NFHS).

This study published in the *Clinical Epidemiology and Global Health* journal centred on children below the ages of three and explored the prevalence and trajectory of undernutrition indicators across India, both nationally and at the state level. The analysis aimed to assess changes over a decade to understand the extent of the issue. Undernutrition can lead to vision impairment, weakened bones, protein deficiency, and gastrointestinal ailments in children.

Officials checking a child's weight at an Anganwadi, in Vijayawada G N RAO

"We firmly grasped the importance of comprehending the epidemiology of the condition before advocating for policy changes or interventions. It's crucial to know who is affected, their locations, and how these factors evolve over time. Armed with this comprehensive understanding, we can aptly tailor existing policies and implement precise nutritional interventions," said Sirshendu Chaudhari, Yashaswini Kumar, AY Nirupama, and Varun Agiwal, authors of the study.

Education and gender

Comparing data from NFHS-1 (1992-93) to NFHS-5 (2019-20), the study found that while the prevalence of wasting (low weight for height) increased marginally from 19.9% to 20.5%, stunting (impaired growth) and the incidence of underweight decreased from 51.9% and 34.1% to 45.8% and 29.4%, respectively. Wasting exhibited a slight increase of 0.21%. The study identified significant factors affecting children's nutritional status, including maternal education and the child's gender. According to the study, all States and Union territories mirrored the national trend of decreasing rates of stunting and underweight among children, though no consistent trend was observed for wasting prevalence.

In the NFHS-1 survey, stunting prevalence ranged from 33.2% (lowest) in Nagaland to 63.8% (highest) in Bihar. By NFHS-5, this range decreased from 23.1% (lowest) in Manipur to 41.6% (highest) in Meghalaya. Similarly, underweight prevalence in NFHS-1 varied from 19.7% in Mizoram to 60.2% in Bihar, but in NFHS-5, it ranged from the lowest of 11.6% in Manipur to the highest of 39.7% in Bihar. In NFHS-1, wasting prevalence spanned from 4.5% in Mizoram to 26.8% in Rajasthan. However, in the 2019-2021 survey, these figures shifted, with the lowest wasting prevalence at 11.4% in Punjab and the highest at 27.7% in Maharashtra. In Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Uttarakhand, stunting, underweight, and wasting rates have consistently decreased over time.

Children in urban areas face an increased risk of stunting, underweight, and wasting over the years, although the statistical significance has remained relatively stable. Male children exhibited a higher likelihood of experiencing stunting, being underweight, and wasting compared to their female counterparts, although this trend did not consistently emerge across all NFHS surveys. Maternal education emerged as a highly significant factor influencing children's susceptibility to undernutrition. Children whose mothers had either no education or only primary education were at double the risk, while those with mothers having secondary education faced a 1.5 times higher risk of developing stunting and being underweight, although this risk decreased from NFHS-1 to NFHS-5.

Valuable insights

The findings of this study highlight the evolving trends in various malnutrition indicators, providing valuable insights into the necessary action to be taken at the State level and their correlation with socio-demographic factors. Looking ahead globally, if the trends observed in NFHS 5 persist, India may fall short of meeting the WHO and SDG-2 targets by 2030, further exacerbated by a potential decline in the Global Hunger Index ranking.

Speaking about the study, one of the authors and also Associate Professor at IIPH Hyderabad, Sirshendu Chaudhari, said, "Enhancing overall nutrition presents a significant hurdle, but one that India has the capacity to conquer. The country boasts numerous initiatives directly or indirectly combating undernutrition. While the government shoulders a substantial part of this responsibility through initiatives like Mission Indradhanush, the onus also falls on parents, caregivers, and educators at the preschool level to identify and address this issue."

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For feedback and suggestions
for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Green signal from High Court to continue screening of *Maidaan*

Producer Boney Kapoor had moved the HC against Mysuru court's April 8 temporary injunction

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka on Thursday cleared the way for continuation of screening of Hindi movie *Maidaan* by staying the temporary injunction granted by a Mysuru civil court against the screening of the movie in any language in any form, including electronic, magnetic and over-the-top (OTT) media platform.

Justice S.R. Krishna Kumar passed the interim order on a petition filed by Boney Kapoor of Bayview Projects Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai, who is a co-producer of the movie along with Zee Studios Ltd.

On April 8, the Mysuru court had issued the *ex parte* temporary injunction against screening of the movie on a suit filed by scriptwriter C.R. Anil Kumar of Mysuru, who had alleged copyright violation by the producers of *Maidaan*.

'Already in theatres'

The petition was filed in the HC on Thursday morning seeking urgent hearing even though the court was closed for Eid, on the grounds that the Mysuru court's order of granting temporary injunction was communicated to the petitioner at the last minute, on Wednesday, by when the screening in theatres had commenced worldwide as per the schedule.

Denying the plaintiff's allegation that the film infringed upon his work titled *Patganduga*, the petitioner contended that *Maidaan*, which depicts the life of a legendary football coach Syed Abdul Rahim, is based on research done by football journalist Novy Kapadia in 2017 specifically for the petitioner's movie proposal and the script and screenplay written by the experts in the field through their agreements with the petitioner.

"Since the film is part of historical fact, no one person is entitled to claim copyright exclusively in any manner," it has been contended in the petition while pointing out that though work on the film began in 2017, it got delayed owing to COVID-19. Even though information on making of the film was available in the public domain since 2019, the plaintiff approached the Mysuru court in a dilatory manner on the eve of the release to simply cause harassment to the producers, it was alleged in the petition.

Appearing for Mr. Kapoor, senior advocate Sajan Poovayya contended that the order of temporary injunction is 'cryptic, laconic, non-speaking and unreasoned, without any application of mind and contrary to the principles for grant of ad-interim *ex parte* order of temporary injunction' as contemplated under the Code of Civil Procedure. There was no material placed on record in the suit to even remotely establish alleged infringement of the copyright, it has been claimed in the petition. The plaintiff claimed that he had registered his story in 2019 and he came to know that *Maidaan* is based on his story after seeing the movie's trailer recently.

Actor Ajay Devgn plays the lead role in the movie, which portrays the golden era of Indian football in the early 1950s and '60s.

Two held for assaulting writer, son

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Kolar Rural police have arrested two persons on charges of allegedly assaulting writer and activist Kotiganahalli Ramaiah and his son over the use of a loudspeaker at a shrine at Paparajanahalli in Kolar district on Thursday. The accused, identified as Manjunath aka Muniyappa and Govindappa aka Krishnappa, have been sent to judicial custody.

According to the police, Mr. Ramaiah and his son Meghavarsha requested the management of Muneshwara temple at Paparajanahalli to keep the volume down of the loudspeaker low as it was disturbing them in the morning and evening hours.

The police further said that when Mr. Ramaiah and his son urged the temple management to reduce the volume, a few people who were in the shrine were infuriated and started to assault them. The victims later filed a complaint at the station. Superintendent of Police, Kolar, M. Narayana talking to *The Hindu* said, "As soon as the case was registered, the rural police swung into action and launched a search. Within a few hours, the accused were arrested. The accused also live in the same village."

A source close to Mr. Ramaiah said he and his son Meghavarsha are now being treated at a hospital in Kolar. Mr. Ramaiah has suffered injuries on the face and his son sustained injuries on his leg.

WORLD'S BEST HOSPITALS 2024
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Global Editor in Chief
Newsweek

Marc Berg
CEO
Statista

Newsweek statista

INBRIEF

Hyundai Motor unveils Grand i10 Nios Corporate variant

Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMIL) unveiled the Corporate Variant of the Grand i10 Nios at an introductory price of ₹6,93,200 (ex-showroom, New Delhi) targeting young Indian customers. So far, HMIL said, it had sold more than four lakh models of the Grand i10 Nios. The Corporate Variant offers best-in-class safety, including six airbags as standard and a host of convenience features, including a 17.14 cm touch-screen display audio, COO Tarun Garg said.

Lubrizol opens new Global Capacity Centre in Pune

Lubrizol Corporation, which is into speciality chemicals, said it had opened a new Global Capability Center (GCC) in Pune as a hub to accelerate growth in India and to enable closer collaboration for customers and employees. "India is undeniably one of our fastest growing markets and a critical hub for the talent we require to propel both regional and global customer success and innovation," said J.T. Jones, Senior VP, High Growth Regions, Lubrizol.

'Expect 15%-17% increase in telecom tariffs post elections'

The telecom industry is expected raise tariffs by 15%-17% post general elections, Antique Stock Broking said in a report, terming the increase "imminent" with Bharti Airtel as the biggest beneficiary. "We expect Bharti's subscriber base to grow at about 2% per annum, against the industry growth of 1% per annum," it said. The brokerage estimates Average Revenue Per User (ARPU) for India's second largest telco to rise from ₹208 to ₹286 by end of FY2027. PTI

'India to face most impact if high U.S. interest rates persist'

ADB expects faster imported inflation in India due to higher inflation sensitivity to exchange rate fluctuations; price gains may quicken 40 bps

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

Higher for longer

India could face significant economic pressure if the EU and the U.S. delay cutting interest rates beyond 2024

- ADB expects currency depreciation will provide some gains for India due to increased export competitiveness
- Positive effects of depreciation could turn negative in 2025, 2026 once monetary easing begins in U.S. and EU
- It sees growth at 7% in FY25, before recovering to 7.2% in FY26

A 'higher for longer' interest rate scenario, under which the U.S. Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank defer anticipated rate cuts to beyond 2024, would impact emerging economies' currencies as well as growth and inflation outlooks, with India likely to see the most pronounced effects among Asian countries, as per an Asian Development Bank simulation.

India's inflation could see an uptick of about 0.4 percentage points through 2024 and 2025, as per the simulation, while GDP growth may see a tad under 0.2 percentage point slowing in 2025, compared with the ADB's baseline projections. The ADB expects growth at 7% this year, before recovering to 7.2% in 2025-26, while it has projected an average inflation rate of 4.6% in 2024-25, followed by 4.5% in the next fiscal year.

"We simulated the potential impacts of a 'higher for longer' interest rates scenario... [and] this is particularly relevant since the U.S. inflation figure came in at 3.5% for March, which is above expectations and higher than the 3.2% inflation recorded in February," said Abdul Abiad, director of ADB's macroeconomics research division.

"The main channel of the effects on emerging economies comes through interest rate differentials, which then leads to an initial depreciation in their currencies," Mr. Abiad said. The relative appreciation of the U.S. dollar and euro in a 'higher-for-longer environment' would result in higher imported inflation due to weaker regional currencies, he addded.

Likely impact

This would add about 0.15 percentage point to inflation in high-income technology exporters and other developing Asian economies relative to the baseline in 2024 and 2025. While there would be a marginal impact on developing Asia's inflation and a slightly lesser effect on growth, the impact would be "more pronounced and persistent for India, given the higher sensitivity" of its inflation to exchange rate fluctuations and its greater reliance on imported goods, the Asian lender concluded.

On the flip side, currency depreciation would provide some gains for India due to increased export competitiveness, which could add 0.05 percentage point to GDP growth this year. However, these positive growth effects could turn negative in 2025 and 2026 once monetary easing in the U.S. and euro areas gradually kicked in, undoing their exchange rate gains.

Mr. Abiad also flagged risks from ongoing conflicts in West Asia and the disruption in shipping routes due to strife in the Red Sea, compelling commercial vessels to take longer and costlier routes. Persistence of high shipping costs could add to inflation pressures, he said.

U.S. consumer prices heated up in March; to delay rate cut

Reuters
WASHINGTON

U.S. consumer prices increased more than expected in March as Americans continued to pay more for gasoline and rental housing, leading financial markets to anticipate that the Federal Reserve would delay cutting interest rates until September.

The third straight month of strong consumer price readings reported by the Labor Department also suggested that the pick up in inflation in January and February could not be solely attributed to businesses raising prices at the start of the year as economists had argued.

The report followed news last week that job growth accelerated in March, with the unemployment rate slipping to 3.8% from 3.9% in February.

"The data does not completely remove the possibility of Fed action this year, but it certainly lessens the chances the Fed is cutting the overnight rate in the next couple months," said Phillip Neuhart, director of market and economic research at First Citizens.

In the 12 months through March, the consumer price index increased 3.5%, the most since September. The CPI was also boosted by last year's low reading dropping out of the calculation. It rose 3.2% in February. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the March CPI advancing 3.4% year-on-year.

India needs a simpler tariff policy to boost manufacturing: ADB

Vikas Dhoot
NEW DELHI

India needs to take greater efforts to simplify its tariff policy, enhance its trade competitiveness and redress its 'limited' integration with global value chains, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said on Thursday, stressing that this was particularly imperative for its manufacturing sector, which was critical to sustain the growth trajectory over the medium term.

India's growth strategy was predicated on substantial export growth that could be achieved through integration into global value chains, and the $2 trillion in exports by 2030 goal set by the government would require considerable growth, the ADB said in its Asia Development Outlook report.

'Global value chains'

"Increasing goods exports requires India to integrate into global value chains (GVCs), which must entail India specialising in stages of production where it has a comparative advantage, as opposed to necessarily looking to be present in the entire value chain," the lender noted, recommending further policy action was needed to improve India's trade competitiveness and integration into GVCs.

'Improve logistics infra'

"A simplified tariff policy is needed along with continued efforts to improve trade and logistics infrastructure," it added.

While India was already a big player in services and knowledge-intensive sectors, which were a growth engine and would continue to remain so, what happened in the manufacturing sector was critical for sustainable growth in the medium term, remarked Rana Hasan, regional lead economist for South Asia at the ADB.

'Trade facilitation key'

Trade policy and trade facilitation efforts were central on this front, Mr. Hasan emphasised.

"As the manufacturing sector grows, and this is really the key, I think it'll give rise to stronger direct linkages between growth drivers in India and the South Asia region that tends to be amongst the sub-regions of the world that is less integrated with the rest of the world and also tends to trade much less with one another, as compared to other sub regions like ASEAN," the economist pointed out.

Historically, India had been little engaged in highly integrated GVCs, the multilateral lender noted.

Oil extends gains on West Asia tension escalation

Reuters
SINGAPORE

Oil prices extended gains on Thursday, after rising a dollar a barrel in the prior session, as investors braced for a worsening of the West Asia crisis, potentially involving Iran, the third-largest oil producer in OPEC.

Brent crude futures advanced by 30 cents to $90.78 a barrel by 0325 GMT. The contract rose more than 1% in the prior session after three sons of a Hamas leader were killed in an Israeli airstrike in Gaza, feeding worries the ceasefire talks might stall.

"Market participants are pricing for risks of supply disruptions if tensions were to drag for longer," said Yeap Jun Rong of IG.

Options galore: The U.S. govt. could look at taking other steps to ensure the economy was not overheating, says Georgieva. REUTERS

IMF's Georgieva says higher U.S rates for long may turn a worry

Reuters
WASHINGTON

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said higher U.S. interest rates were not great news for the rest of the world and they could become a worry if they continued for a long time, but she believed the U.S. Fed was acting prudently.

Ms. Georgieva told an event hosted by the Atlantic Council that the U.S. government could also look at taking other measures to ensure that the U.S. economy was not overheating.

"Higher interest rates... is not great news. Higher interest rates makes U.S. more attractive so financial flows come here and that leaves the rest of the world somewhat struggling."

Amalgamations unit Simpsons plans e-power weeders

N. Anand
CHENNAI

Simpsons to develop cost-effective weeders that can substitute for imported machines

Simpson & Co. Ltd. (Simpsons), a unit of the Amalgamations Group, is gearing up to electrify its smart agriculture machines known as power weeders for farm mechanisation.

"Four months ago, we launched Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) petrol version of power weeders in the 5.5-8 HP in select few markets such as Tamil Nadu, U.P., M.P. and Bihar," said a top official.

"While the battery is procured from Honda, the rest is developed in-house. We are getting good response and we will go pan-India soon. Post subsidy, these machines cost ₹70,000 and ₹1,10,000 respectively," he said.

Following the success of the petrol engine version, Simpsons plans to introduce an electric version and the prototypes are being readied. However, it is too early to talk about the launch date, said a source.

The motors and controllers for e-power weeders is most likely to be produced in-house, while batteries will be manufactured by the group associate firm Bimetal Bearings Ltd. at Hosur.

"Typically, weeders are used by those having farm houses or land below one acre, while tillers are preferred by those having one to five acres. We are trying to improve the livelihood of micro farmers by developing cost-effective weeders and at the same time to substitute the imported machines," said the source.

The market size of power weeders is estimated to be around ₹1,200 crore, while the accessories for different applications is another ₹300 crore. Simpsons will be hoping to capture 20-25% market share.

Majority of key commodities exported to China record positive growth in 2023

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

As many as 90 principal commodities like iron ore, telecom instruments and electronic components exported to China have recorded a positive growth in 2023 out of the total 161 such goods shipped to the neighbouring country, according to commerce ministry data.

These 90 commodities account for 67.7% of India's export basket to China, while 71 products that have registered a negative export growth in 2023 constitute 32.3%, the data showed.

There are four commodities level where India has improved its export to China by more than $100 million in 2023. They are iron ore (216.8% to $3.33 billion in 2023), cotton yarn (542.6% to $611.17 million in 2023), spices (19.4% to $132.26 million in 2023), and processed minerals (174.19% to $129 million in 2023).

For another 15 products, the improvement in exports is in the bracket of $10-100 billion.

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVT. OF KERALA)
Head Office : Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-14,
(Telephone No. 0471-2945600, FAX No. 0471-2945647),
E-mail : oncocare@kmscl.kerala.gov.in,
website : www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616

No.KMSCL/ED/15/2024 Date : 08.04.2024

E- TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited from manufacturers/ loan licensees on behalf of Animal Husbandry Department, Govt of Kerala for the procurement of Veterinary Medicines for the year 2023-24.

Sl. No.	Tender No. and Date	Category	No. of items
1.	KMSCL/AHD-VET/RC/2024/004 dtd. 08.04.2024	Veterinary Medicines	60

The last date and time of online uploading of tender will be 02.05.2024, 5.00 pm. The date and time of opening of Technical bid will be 06.05.2024 11.00 am. Tender shall be downloaded and submitted online through the e-tender portal **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**.

(Sd/-) MANAGING DIRECTOR (Tender Inviting Authority)

Top-ends and EVs driving demand in India: Mercedes CEO

Lalatendu Mishra
MUMBAI

Luxury car maker Mercedes-Benz India said its electric vehicles (EV) portfolio in January-March quarter grew 130% y-o-y and EV penetration rose more than 6% in Q4 FY24.

Mercedes said it would double its EV portfolio by introducing three variants in remaining quarters of CY24 taking the total to 6 EVs. The company will debut a combination of luxury and performance with its AMG S63 e-Performance vehicle in Q1 FY2025.

"Due to the continued trust of customers in our products, we achieved the highest-ever quarter and best-ever fiscal in India," said CEO Santosh Iyer.

Mercedes sold 5412 units in the January-March 2024 quarter, up 15% from 4697 units sold in the year ago period.

In FY24 the company sold 18,123 units, 10% more than 16,497 units sold in FY23.

As part of its plans to expand its retail network in key metropolis, the company will have 25 MAR 20X facilities by year-end.

TVS SCS reaches 5-lakh milestone in CKD kits

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

TVS Supply Chain Solutions Ltd. (TVS SCS) announced it had reached a milestone of 5 lakh Complete Knock Down (CKD) kits for TVS Motor Company from its dedicated warehouse facility at Hosur.

At the Hosur unit, TVS SCS provides end-to-end value-added services such as production planning, quality management, inbound material activities, and exports, the global supply chain solutions provider said in a statement.

BHARATIYA RESERVE BANK NOTE MUDRAN (P) LIMITED
(WHOLLY OWNED SUBSIDIARY OF RESERVE BANK OF INDIA)
Note Mudran Nagar, Mysuru-570 003, Karnataka, India

NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BID THROUGH MSTC IN E-TENDERING MODE

Tender No. 003/MYS/CIVIL/2024-25 dtd 11/04/2024
MSTC Event No. BRBNMPL/MYSURU PRESS/CIVIL/1/24-25/ET/5
Name of the Work: Construction of Learning and Development Centre at BRBNMPL, Mysuru.
Estimated Cost: ₹ 40,12,00,000/-

For downloading tender documents and other details kindly visit following websites:
https://www.mstcecommerce.com/eprocn, https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app and www.brbnmpl.co.in.

Further extension or amendment, if any will be uploaded in the above mentioned websites only.

General Manager & OIC

KERALA MEDICAL SERVICES CORPORATION LTD
(DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE, GOVT. OF KERALA)
Head Office : Thycaud, Thiruvananthapuram-14,
(Telephone No. 0471-2945600),
E-mail : edrugs.kmscl@kerala.gov.in,
website : www.kmscl.kerala.gov.in, CIN No. U24233KL2007SGC021616

No.KMSCL/ED/39/2023 Date : 09.04.2024

RE-TENDER NOTICE

Online bids are invited for the procurement of Recombinant Anti Haemophilic Factor VIII for the year 2023-2024 from manufacturers/direct importers / loan licensees.

Sl. No.	Tender No. and Date	Item Name	No. of Items
1.	KMSCL/ED/HAEM/RT/2024/006 dtd.09.04.2024	Recombinant Anti Haemophilic Factor VIII 250 IU & 500 IU	2

Schedule of dates

	Date	Time
Last date of online uploading of tenders	02.05.2024	Up to 05.00pm.
Date of technical bid opening	06.05.2024	11.00 am. onwards

Tenders shall be downloaded and submitted online through the e-tender portal **www.etenders.kerala.gov.in**.

(Sd/-) MANAGING DIRECTOR (Tender Inviting Authority)

Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

Number of vacant posts in pollution control bodies

6,075 More than 50% of the 12,016 sanctioned posts in 28 State pollution control boards and eight pollution control committees are vacant. PTI

Sunflower oil imports touch record high in March

4.45 lakh tonne. India imported a record crude sunflower oil in March, taking advantage of lower prices, while the country's total edible oil imports reached 11.49 lakh tonne in the month. PTI

Share of vacant train driver posts: Railway Board in RTI response

14.7 in percentage. Out of the total 1.27 lakh sanctioned posts of both drivers and assistant drivers in all railway zones across the country, 18,766 were lying vacant as of March 1. PTI

India's rank in the World Cybercrime Index

10 According to a study published in the journal PLoS ONE, Russia topped the list of cybercrime with frauds involving people making advance fee payments being the most common type. PTI

Workers from India to be brought to Israel by May

6,000 Indian workers will arrive in Israel to help the country's construction sector to meet a labour shortage. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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ISRO's 'zero orbital debris' milestone

How did ISRO ensure practically zero debris left in earth orbit after the PSLV-C58/XPoSat mission? What is the purpose and function of the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3)? How does it contribute to space debris mitigation efforts? What are the risks space debris poses to space assets?

EXPLAINER

Suchitra Karthikeyan

The story so far:

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has said its PSLV-C58/XPoSat mission has practically left zero debris in earth orbit. The space agency explained that the last stage of the Polar Satellite Launch vehicle (PSLV) used in the mission was transformed into a kind of orbital station – called the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3) – before it was left to re-enter the earth's atmosphere instead of floating in orbit once its mission was completed. ISRO said that after it completed the primary mission of injecting all satellites into their target orbits, the fourth stage of the PSLV was transformed into the POEM-3. It was subsequently de-orbited from 650 km to 350 km, rendering it more susceptible to being pulled towards the earth and burning up in the atmosphere. ISRO also said it "passivated the stage," meaning dumped its fuel, to avoid an explosion that could have flung small pieces of debris into orbit.

What is POEM?

Developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) as an inexpensive space platform, POEM uses the spent fourth stage of a PSLV rocket as an orbital platform. Used for the first time in the PSLV-C53 mission in June 2022, ISRO had POEM orbit the earth to perform in-orbit scientific experiments with various payloads onboard.

POEM is powered by solar panels mounted on the fuel tank of the rocket's fourth stage and a lithium-ion battery. It has a navigation, guidance, and control (NGC) system to stabilise its altitude along with helium control thrusters. The NGC system has four Sun sensors, a magnetometer, and gyroscopes, and talks to ISRO's NavIC satellite constellation for navigation. POEM also has a telecommand system to communicate with the ground station.

Orbital threat: With the rise in the number of satellites in orbit around the earth, space debris has become a pressing issue. AFP

ISRO first demonstrated the reuse of the spent fourth stage of its rocket in its PSLV C-44 mission in 2019. After satellites were injected into the target orbits, the fourth stage, carrying a student payload called Kalamsat-V2, was moved to a higher circular orbit of 443 km and stayed there, facilitating the payload's requirements.

What has POEM-3 achieved?

ISRO launched the PSLV C-58 mission from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on January 1.

After deploying the XPoSat satellite in its desired orbit of 650 km, the fourth stage, now called POEM-3, was lowered to a 350-km-high circular orbit. The lower a satellite is in orbit around the earth, the more drag it experiences and the more energy it needs to expend to stay in orbit.

POEM-3 featured nine payloads: two each from VSSC and Bellatrix Aerospace Pvt Ltd, one each from the start-ups TakeMe2Space, Inspecity Space Labs Pvt Ltd., Dhruva Space, and from LBS Institute of Technology, KJ Somaiya Institute of Technology, and ISRO's Physics Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad.

It completed 400 orbits around the earth by its 25th day. The payloads were operationalised to perform their experiments at this time. ARKA200, RUDRA, and LEAP-TD completed their respective experiments while the data from WeSAT, RSEM, and DEX were collected after every orbit for further analysis on the ground. Two fuel cells from VSSC demonstrated their ability to generate power. By January 27, 2024, all of POEM-3's payload objectives were completed.

For two months, POEM-3 prepared for its re-entry while ISRO tracked it with its Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network stations in Bengaluru, Lucknow, Mauritius, Sriharikota, Port Blair, Thiruvananthapuram, Brunei, and Biak (Indonesia) and the Multi-Object Tracking Radar (MOTR) at Sriharikota. On March 21, POEM-3 re-entered the earth's atmosphere, meeting its fiery end.

Why is this significant?

With the rise in the number of satellites in orbit around the earth, space debris has become a pressing issue. Space debris in the low earth orbit (LEO) mainly comprises pieces of spacecraft, rockets, and defunct satellites, and the fragments of objects that have deteriorated explosively as a result of anti-satellite missile tests. This debris often flies around at high speeds of up to 27,000 km/hr. Due to their sheer volume and momentum, they pose a risk to several space assets.

The LEO extends from 100 km above the earth's surface up to 2000 km above. It includes satellites tracking intelligence data, encrypted communication, and navigation. According to ISRO's Space Situational Assessment Report 2022, the world placed 2,533 objects in space in 179 launches in 2022.

Debris also exists, but in smaller volumes, in the geosynchronous orbit (GEO) 36,000 km above the earth's surface. Currently, 7,000 operational satellites are orbiting the earth at different altitudes along with millions of pieces of space debris. The U.S. Space Command tracks and catalogues space debris larger than 10 centimetres in LEO and larger than 0.3-1 metres in GEO.

How are agencies dealing with debris?

The latest incident of space debris causing havoc was recorded on March 8 when a discarded battery pallet dropped by the International Space Station ripped through the roof of a house in Florida.

As more communication satellites/constellations are launched and more anti-satellite tests are conducted, more on-orbit breakup and collisions occur, producing smaller fragments in orbit. The number of space objects (debris or functional equipment) greater than 10 cm in size in LEO is expected to be about 60,000 by 2030, per ISRO estimates. Space debris can also create unusable regions of the orbit where too much debris has accumulated, and which can trigger a cascading avalanche of collisions that produce yet more, but smaller pieces of, debris.

Currently, there are no international space laws pertaining to LEO debris. Most spacefaring nations abide by the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines 2002 specified by the Inter-Agency Space Debris Coordination Committee (IADC), which the U.N. endorsed in 2007.

THE GIST

- ISRO successfully conducted the PSLV-C58/XPoSat mission, deploying the XPoSat satellite into orbit and subsequently transforming the last stage of the PSLV into the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-3 (POEM-3).
- Developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), POEM utilises the spent fourth stage of a PSLV rocket as an orbital platform for scientific experiments.
- POEM-3 completed 400 orbits around the earth, operationalising nine payloads to conduct various experiments before re-entering the earth's atmosphere.
- With the increasing number of satellites in orbit, space debris poses a significant risk to space assets.

Is transparency lacking in candidate disclosure?

How has the Supreme Court addressed concerns about candidates with serious criminal charges contesting elections? What reforms have been proposed by the Law Commission and EC to address these issues?

Rangarajan. R

The story so far:

The Supreme Court recently held that candidates need not disclose every piece of information and possession in their election affidavit unless it is substantial in nature. In another development, the Election Commission of India (EC) has asked the Central Board of Direct Taxes to verify the declaration with respect to yearly income in the affidavit filed by Rajeev Chandrashekar, the BJP candidate from Thiruvananthapuram.

What does the law specify?

Section 33 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) read with rule 4A of election rules, requires every contesting candidate to file their nomination paper for elections along with an affidavit in a prescribed format. In *Association of Democratic Reforms (ADR) Vs Union of India* (2002), the Supreme Court held that voters have the right to know about the criminal antecedents, income and asset details of the candidate and his/her dependants and educational qualification of contesting candidates. This resulted in Section 33A being added to the RP Act that requires details of criminal antecedents to be part of the election affidavit.

Section 125A of the RP Act further provides that failure to furnish required information; giving false information or concealing any information in the nomination paper or affidavit shall be punishable with imprisonment up to six months or fine or both.

What are the issues?

In a recent case, an independent candidate from Arunachal Pradesh failed to declare three vehicles as assets in his election affidavit while contesting the Assembly election in 2019. His election was set aside by the Gauhati High Court. However, the Supreme Court reversed the decision and held that non-disclosure of information that is not material or substantial cannot be treated as an attempt to unduly influence the voters. In the case of Mr. Chandrashekhar, the complaint is about alleged concealment of his income and substantial assets in his election affidavit that can have a potential impact on the decision of the voters.

An even more significant issue relates to candidates with serious criminal charges contesting elections. Some candidates circumvented the requirement of rule 4A by leaving certain columns blank and filing incomplete affidavits. It once again required an order of the court in Resurgence India Vs EC (2013), to ensure that all columns are filled appropriately. According to a report by ADR, 19% of candidates in the 2019 Lok Sabha election faced charges of rape, murder or kidnapping.

The Law Commission in its 244th report on 'Electoral Disqualifications' (2014) and EC in its memorandum on 'Electoral reforms' submitted in 2016 had provided certain recommendations. First, a conviction for filing a false affidavit should attract a punishment of a minimum of two years imprisonment and be a ground for disqualification. Second, the trials in such cases must be conducted on a day-to-day basis. Finally, persons charged by a competent court with offences punishable by imprisonment of at least five years should be debarred from contesting in the elections provided the case is filed at least 6 months before the election in question.

The Supreme Court in *Public Interest Foundation Vs Union of India* (2018) directed candidates as well as political parties to issue a declaration about criminal antecedents, at least three times before the election, in a newspaper in the locality and electronic media.

What can be the way forward?

Debarring chargesheeted candidates from contesting elections is likely to be misused by various ruling parties. However, the other recommendations with respect to increasing punishment for filing false affidavits and making it a ground for disqualification need to be implemented. The Supreme Court's order to provide wide publicity of criminal records should also be strictly implemented. This would enable a discerning voter to exercise a well-informed choice.

Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. Views expressed are personal

THE GIST

- The Supreme Court ruled that candidates are not obligated to disclose every detail in their election affidavits unless the information is substantial in nature.
- Instances of candidates failing to disclose assets and income have raised questions about the transparency and completeness of affidavits.
- While debarring candidates based on chargesheets could be misused, implementing stricter punishment for false affidavits and increasing transparency in disclosing criminal records are crucial steps. Ensuring voter awareness and informed choices through better disclosure mechanisms is essential for electoral integrity.

Disappointment with govt. over delay in the revamp of Indira Canteens

Apart from opening two new ones at KIA, canteens have not been revamped anywhere else in Karnataka; government had promised to increase the number from 165 to 250

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

The inordinate delay in revamping Indira canteens, which are currently in a sorry state, has struck a note of disappointment among a section of citizens, particularly the poor and working class, especially given that the project is a flagship one of the Congress and known to be dear to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah.

Apart from opening two canteens in Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) in Bengaluru, nowhere in Karnataka have the canteens been revamped. The government had promised to increase the number of canteens from 165 to 250. The government had also proposed to change the menu.

Indira Canteens is a flagship project of the Congress and known to be dear to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. FILE PHOTO

Breakfast is served at ₹5, lunch and dinner are served at ₹10 in the canteens. In Bengaluru, although the BBMP has submitted the tender, the government is yet to give a nod.

S. Babu, Bengaluru District Street Vendors Association, said many street vendors and pourakarmikas have stopped eating in the canteens due to the poor quality of food. "The quality has been deteriorating since the last few years. Our hopes were revived after the Congress government made an announcement of relaunching the canteens, but they have been dashed with the delay," he said.

T. Pachaiyappan, an auto driver who lives in Ulsoor, said the setting up of Indira Canteens was the best thing that happened to Karnataka. Thousands of auto drivers were visiting them. "Eating in the canteens helped drivers save money. But later, after the Congress lost the Assembly elections in 2018, many canteens became defunct. The quality was also compromised. Now, auto drivers do not visit. The new government should have refurbished the canteens," he said.

Sunil Bajilakere, an activist from Mangaluru, said no canteen in Mangaluru is functioning, and this is a disadvantage for the poor.

Venkatesh P., a resident of Raichur, said the government's failure to implement its promise of reviving the canteens may not have a deep impact on the elections, but would have earned favour among voters, especially in rural and backward areas.

Water crisis: Residents to boycott polls

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The water crisis in Bengaluru has now hit the Lok Sabha elections too with residents of a layout in J.P. Nagar deciding to boycott the polls, owing to the apathy by the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) in providing the Cauvery water supply.

Over a hundred residents from Royal Lakefront Residency have signed a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Over a hundred residents from Royal Lakefront Residency have signed a letter to the Chief Electoral Officer in which they have said that elections will be boycotted. The residents claim that they have been working with the BWSSB for 20 years now to get the Cauvery water supply, but it has not yielded results. "We have underground drainage facility and community water supply through borewells in the locality. But these borewells have gone dry. We have no water supply at all," said Nagesh. R., president, Royal Lakefront Residency Residents and Site Owners' Welfare Association, in the letter.

He added: "We are helplessly obliged to depend on unreliable private water tankers paying very heavy charges as the borewells have dried up."

Residents said that they were recently asked by the BWSSB to pay ₹1,30,75,550 for Phase 1 and ₹1,04,19,627 for Phase 2 for the Cauvery water connection. They alleged that the BWSSB was providing water to many revenue and B-khata layouts without such infrastructure charges, but only connection charges to individual houses.

The residents said that while there were two BWSSB storage tanks within one kilometre of the layout, a new one is also coming up soon. However, they said that instead of supplying water to residents of the layout, it is going to other distant places. They have urged the BWSSB to provide them with water supply from these tanks.

The residents have said that if their grievances are not met, then they will also boycott any subsequent elections.

BJP claims party worker's brother assaulted by Congress member, but no party named in FIR

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Legislative Assembly R. Ashok in a post on X (formerly Twitter) alleged that a brother of a BJP worker was assaulted by a worker attached to the Congress at Bidadi in Ramanagara district.

However, neither the complaint copy nor the FIR registered in the Bidadi police station named the involvement of any political party in the incident that occurred recently.

Mr. Ashok said: "Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and Bengaluru Rural Congress candidate D.K. Suresh in frustration of losing the election have resorted to goondaism. Despite the fact that a brother of a BJP worker was assaulted, why is the accused still not arrested? Has Siddaramaiah succumbed before DK brothers?"

He further urged the Election Commission to initiate action to stop such elements from creating fear among the electorate.

But the FIR copy shows that the complainant, identified as Shivakumar C.S., who is a brother of the victim identified as Naveen, has not named any party or political rivalry behind the incident.

According to the FIR, Shivakumar received a call in the morning from a man identified as Sukhesh, who informed him that his brother was at a farm belonging to Kabaddi Babu of Kempashetty Doddi.

Shivakumar and his father went there and they found Naveen arguing with a man named Shekhara and a farm worker of Kempadoddi village. Shekhara and others are accused in the case. According to the FIR, Shivakumar urged Naveen and Shekhara to calm down and the accused allegedly hit Naveen's head using a wooden log. As a result, Naveen started to bleed. The farm worker also hit Naveen's father, identified as Sheshadri.

Shivakumar escaped with Naveen and Sheshadri. Naveen is currently being treated at a private hospital.

Talking to *The Hindu*, Shivakumar said: "My brother had left home at 1 a.m. on Tuesday and I received a call at 10 a.m. in the morning. When I reached, they were arguing and I do not know what was the reason. The police are now recording the statements of Naveen and he can only tell why this happened."

When asked about the political rivalry behind the incident, he said, "I do not know anything."

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to the general public that Mrs. Shailaja B. Bhat, Mr. Vikram Bhat and Ms. Preetham Bhat (**'Owners'**) are the joint and absolute owners of the immovable property bearing Municipal No. 5 (Old No. 350), having PID No. 62-127-5, measuring 3,720 square feet along with the building constructed thereon together with a passage, measuring 841 square feet, situated at 2nd Cross, I Block Jayanagar, Bengaluru - 560011 (**'Property'**). The Owners have lost/misplaced the original Sale Deed dated 28.10.1972 (Registered as Document No. 2404/1972-73, Book-I, Volume No. 196, at Pages 108 to 112, at the Office of Sub-Registrar, Jayanagar) in connection with the Property (**'Sale Deed'**).

Despite best efforts, the Owners are unable to trace the Sale Deed for which a Police Complaint intimating the loss has been filed with Karnataka State Police, Bengaluru City, *vide* E- Lost Report on 08.04.2024 bearing Reference No. 1007826/2024. Members of the public are hereby notified that in the event any person/s has/have found/ discovered/ is in custody of the Sale Deed, such person/s is/are hereby requested to return the Sale Deed to the undersigned, at the below-mentioned address.

Sd/- Date : 12.04.2024
Ms. Brijita Prakash, Partner Place : Bengaluru
DSK Legal
Prestige Loka, No. 201, 2nd Floor, No. 7/1 & 7/7, Brunton Road, Craig Park Layout, Bengaluru – 560025, Tel: 080-69548770.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
(TIRUCHCHIRAPPALLI DIVISION)
E-TENDER NOTICE No. T-SG-36-I-1-2024-2025
Dated: 08.04.2024

For and on behalf of The President of India, Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Southern Railway, Tiruchchirappalli invites online tender for the following work up to **14.00 hrs** on **30.04.2024**

Item No.	Tender Notice No.	Name of the Work
1	T-SG-36-I-1-2024-2025	Diversion of S&T assets in view of various electrical and engineering works across TPJ Division.

Item No.	Cash Value (₹)	Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	Validity Offer	Date and Time of Closing	Period of Completion in months
1	1.47 crores	2,23,600/-	60 Days	on 30.04.2024 at 14:00 Hrs	12 Months

If the date of opening of tenders happens to be a declared holiday at a later date, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at the stipulated time.
The detailed Tender Notice, Tender document along with terms & conditions and if any corrigendum to tender is issued can be accessed through **https://www.ireps.gov.in** GST will apply as per extent norms of GOI.
Tender document along with terms & conditions and if any corrigendum to tender is issued.

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to notify the General Public that my clients, **Sri. BORE GOWDA H.C & Smt. NAGAVENI H.R.** entered into Sale Agreement dated: 18/03/2024 for purchase of below mentioned schedule property from its owners **Smt. M.N. GAJALAKSHMI, W/o. H.S. Nanja Setty,** R/at No. 680, I-C Main, Girinagar, Bengaluru-560085 and **Smt. M. SAVITHRAMMA, W/o. Gundappa,** R/at No.3/1, 19th "B" Main, Muneshwara Block, Avalahalli, Bengaluru-560026.

Any person/s, banks / financial Sectors / individual /authorities etc., having any claim/s, right, share or interest over the schedule property shall file his/her/their/its objections along with original documents with the undersigned within **07 DAYS** from the date of this publication.

Any objections on and after **07 days,** shall not be entertained and my clients shall proceed with the sale transaction presuming that there are no claim/s of anyone whatsoever over the same.

SCHEDULE

Old Site No.31, New No.4, having **PID No. 61-23-4,** situated at **Yellappa Lane/Street, Chikkamavalli, Bengaluru-560004,** now comes under the limits of BBMP, Ward No. 143 (Vishvewarapuram) measuring East to West: 15 feet and North to South: 60 feet and bounded on:

East by : House of Venkatappa,
West by : House of Muninanjappa,
North by : House of Pabbagiri Achar & Dasappa,
South by : Road,

(A.N. Krishna), Advocate,
#7, 2nd Floor, B.R. Ramu Building,
Diagonal Road, V.V. Puram, Bengaluru-560004.
Bengaluru Date : 11-04-2024

IN THE COURT OF THE LVII ADDL. CITY CIVIL AND SESSIONS JUDGE, MAYOHALL, AT BENGALURU
O.S. NO. 26079/2021 (CH-58)
THE INDIAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH TRUST, R/a. 1511 Kamannahalli Main Road, Ext Thomas Town Bangalore-560084, Represented by its Authorised Representative, Mrs. Naomi Deb, Aged about 35 years, D/o Shukhu Seb. **PLAINTIFFS**
AND: Mr. R. NAGARAJA DEFENDANT
NOTICE TO DEFENDANT
Defendant: Mr. R. NAGARAJA, Aged 62 years, S/o. S. Ramakrishnappa, #324 4th D cross HRBR Layout," 3rd Block Kalyan Nagar, Bangalore 560043.
WHEREAS, the Plaintiffs has filed a suit against the Defendant for Permanent Injunction restraining the Defendant, his henchmen,agent or any other person through him from interfering and entering upon the suit Schedule property belonging to the Plaintiff, in O.S. No.26079/2021 and the same pending adjudication before the 57th Addl. City Civil Court, Mayohall, Bengaluru (CCH-58).
You are hereby summoned to appear before the Hon'ble 57th Addl. City Civil and Sessions Court, Mayo Hall, CCH -58 on 28th May 2024 at 11 a.m. to answer to the same, failing which you will be placed ex-parte and the suit will be decided in your absence.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of land with building thereon comprising of Site No.9,10,11, 24 24A as portion of Houselist No.170 in Khata No.170/1, Chelekere Village, Banaswadi, KR Puram Hobli, Bangalore South Taluk. (Now East Taluk) Bounded by: East by: Site No.2. West by: 25 feet road. North by: 25 feet road. South by: 25 feet Road PLUS SITE No.23 and 32 Totally measuring 10,000 Sq ft. Measuring: East to West: 100+50 North to South: 70 + 60 BBMP PID 170/170/1 - Ward 25 Horamavu
Given under my Hand and Seal of the Court this the 2nd day of April 2024.
By the Order of the Court
Deputy Registrar City Civil court, Mayohall Bengaluru
Advocate for Plaintiff: **Shashank Kumar,** Advocate, #47, Nethaji Road, Frazer Town, Bengaluru-560005.
Bengaluru, Date: 13.03.2024

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice to the General Public
My client **Mr. GANGADHAR. K,** Aged about 52 years, S/o. Mr. Krishnappa, R/at. No. 120, BrundhaNilaya, 2nd 'A' Cross, GhataPrabha Road, NRI Layout, Kalkere, Horamavu, Bangalore-5600043. isintending to purchase the Schedule property from its owners, **1) Sri. M.V SRIRAMAREDDY,** Aged about 65 years, S/o. Late. Venataramana Reddy, **2) Sri. M. N. NAGESH,** Aged about 40 years, **3) Sri. NANDEESHA M.S,** aged about 39 years, Sl. No. 2 and 3 are children of S/o. Sri. M.V. Sriramareddy, Sl. No. 1 to 3 are R/at. Madanahalli Village, Velagalaburre, Kolar - 563126, **4) Smt. M. S. NANDA SHREE,** Aged about 38 years, D/o. Sri. M.V. Sriramareddy, W/o. K. Sonnegowda, R/at. Haleri, Matnahalli, Bangarpet, Kolar 563101, for Valuable Consideration. Any persons having any rights/claims/objections/Minor Claims, in respect of the schedule property are hereby requested to send their objections to the above mentioned address within **7 days,** from the receipt of the this public notice. If no objections are forth coming within **7 days,** my client shall get executed sale deed in his favour.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of the property Land bearing Survey No. 35, measuring 33 Guntas and 04 Guntas Karabhu, out of 1 Acre 16 guntas and 04 Guntas Karabhu, Situated at Settivarahalli Village, Suguturu Hobli, Kolar Taluk, Kolar District and bounded on: **East by :** Property belongs to Krishnappa, **West by :** Property belongs to Balle Mallappa, **North by :**Settivarahalli to Madnahalli Road, **South by :** Property in Sy. No. 33
Mr. MANJUNATH REDDY,
SMT. T. SHOBHA REDDY
No. 8/7, Mega City BEML Layout Road, Maragondanahalli Main Road, K.R. Puram Post, Bangalore-36.
Ph:- 9845520830, 9845247831.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice to the General Public
My client **Mrs. BHARATHI. S,** aged about 50 years, W/o. Mr. Gangadhara, R/at. No. 120, Brundha Nilaya, 2nd 'A' Cross, GhataPrabha Road, NRI Layout, Kalkere, Horamavu, Bangalore-5600043. isintending to purchase the Schedule property from its owners, 1) Sri. M.V SRIRAMAREDDY, Aged about 65 years, S/o. Late. Venataramana Reddy, 2) Sri. M. N. NAGESH, aged about 40 years, 3) Sri. NANDEESHA M.S, aged about 39 years, Sl. No. 2 and 3 are children of S/o. Sri. M.V. Sriramareddy, Sl. No. 1 to 3 are R/at. Madanahalli Village, Velagalaburre, Kolar - 563126, 4) Smt. M. S. NANDA SHREE, Aged about 38 years, D/o. Sri. M.V. Sriramareddy, W/o. K. Sonnegowda, R/at. Haleri, Matnahalli, Bangarpet, Kolar 563101, for Valuable Consideration. Any persons having any rights/claims/objections/Minor Claims, in respect of the schedule property are hereby requested to send their objections to the above mentioned address within 7 days, from the receipt of the this public notice. If no objections are forth coming within 7 days, my client shall get executed sale deed in herfavour.
SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that piece and parcel of the property Land bearing Survey No. 33, measuring 5 Acre 22 Guntas, Situated at Settivarahalli Village, Suguturu Hobli, Kolar Taluk, Kolar District,, and bounded on: **East by :** Property belongs to Munivenkatappa & Venkateshappa, **West by :** Property belongs to Mallaiah, **North by :** Property in Sy. No. 35, & Krishnappa's property, **South by :** Property belongs to Puttamma,
Mr. MANJUNATH REDDY,
SMT. T. SHOBHA REDDY
No. 8/7, Mega City BEML Layout Road, Maragondanahalli Main Road, K.R. Puram Post, Bangalore-36.
Ph:- 9845520830, 9845247831.

PUBLIC NOTICE

My client is intending to purchase the properties morefully described in the schedule herein below from **(i) MR. CHARAN RAJ.V** S/o. Late. Venkatesh, AADHAAR No.7704-8198-9472, (ii) **SRI. N.SRINIVAS @ N. SRINIVASA,** S/o. Late. Muninarayanappa @ D.Narayanappa, AADHAAR No.7817-8928-2796, (iii) **SRI. GOVINDARAJU.D.M,** S/o. Late. Muninarayanappa @ D.Narayanappa, AADHAAR No.2133-0491-4422, (iv) **SRI. MANJUNATH.D.M,** S/o. Late. Muninarayanappa @ D.Narayanappa, AADHAAR No.9533-1911-2178, (v) **SRI. MAHESH.D.M @ M.MAHESH,** S/o. Late. Muninarayanappa @ D.Narayanappa, AADHAAR No.6546-8417-1677, all residing at House No.79, Kempegowda Main Road, Dasarahalli, H. A Farm, Bengaluru North, Bengaluru - 560 024, as they claim that they are the absolute joint owners in possession of the Schedule Properties and the same are free from all encumbrances, charges, claims, or demands of whatsoever nature.
Any person/s having an objection to the transaction may lodge their objection/s supported by cogent documents with the undersigned within **FIFTEEN DAYS** from the date of this notice. If no objection/s is/are raised within the said period, my client would go ahead with the sale transaction in respect of the property below mentioned deeming there is/are no objection/s from whomsoever and of whatsoever nature.
SCHEDULE PROPERTIES
ITEM No. 1 - ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF immovable agriculture land bearing **Re-Sy No.48/2 measuring 02:00 (A/G),** situated at **Pandithapura Village**, Kundana Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, which is bounded on:
East by : Land in Sy No.2/3; West by : Land in Sy No.48/1; North by : Road; South by : Land in Sy No.48/3.
ITEM No. 2 - ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF immovable agriculture land **Re-Sy No.48/3 measuring 01:08 (A/G),** situated at **Pandithapura Village**, Kundana Hobli, Devanahalli Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, which is bounded on:
East by : Land in Sy No.2/3; West by : Land in Sy No.47/1; North by : Land in Sy No.48/1 & 48/2; South by : Land in Sy No.49.
From: **V. C. Chandan,** Advocate, LEGAL EYES, Advocates & Solicitors, No.892, 'Prathama', 8th A Main Road, 3rd Stage, 3rd Block, Basaveshwaranagar, Bengaluru-560 079. Mob : +91-90360-05454
Email: chandangowda21gmail.com
Bengaluru, Date: 12/04/2024

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY G20
Re-engagement on contract basis
Construction Organisation, South Western Railway invites applications for Re-engagement on contract basis as **LAND ACQUISTION ASSOCIATE** from eligible Retired State Government employees who had superannuated from Revenue/Forests Department as Revenue Inspectors OR alike, Or in Pay Band 27650-52650, 30350-58250 of Karnataka State Govt. Pay scale OR regular Group 'C' post in Pay Level - 7 of 7th CPC or equivalent.
Total number of requirements is for 08 posts.
The Last Date for receipt of Applications through e-mail at **recruitment.cnswr@gmail.com** is **30-04-2024** in a Single and Legible PDF File .
For further instructions/notification/other details please visit- www.swr.indianrailways.gov.in ⇨ About Us ⇨ Construction Organisation ⇨ Recruitment
Deputy Chief Personnel Officer
Construction/Bengaluru Cantonment
PUB/12/AAD/PRB/SWR/2024-25
South Western Railway - SWR | SWRRLY | SWRRLY

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the general public that our clients are in the process of purchasing the property, Apartment bearing **No. 502** in **4th floor** of Block **"DEODAR"** of the project **"PRESTIGE ST. JOHN'S WOOD"**, bearing **Old PID/ Khatha No. 66-39-18/325** situated at property bearing Municipal No. 18, 2nd cross road, Chikka Adugodi, Ward No. 66, Bangalore District, Bangalore more fully mentioned and described in the Schedule hereunder, from its **Owner, Mr. SURENDRA KUMAR (wrongly mentioned as Surender Kumar in the Sale Deed).** Any person/s having objection/s or claim/s over the Schedule Property shall, with documentary evidence, lodge their objections or claims within **15 (Fifteen) days** from the date of this notice to the undersigned, failing which our client shall proceed with the above mentioned purchase. Please note that the claims, if any, arise in future, shall not be entertained.
SCHEDULE
SCHEDULE 'A'
All that piece and parcel of the property of the Property bearing Municipal No.18, 2nd Cross Road, Chikka Adugodi, Ward No. 66, Bangalore and measuring 40235 Sq. Mtrs., (4,33,090 Sq. Feet) and bounded by:
East: Earlier Property of CBCI Society for Medical Education (St.John's Medical College) bearing Sy.Nos. 80/4, 81/8 and 81 and presently Road; **West:** Main Road leading to Thavarekere; **North:** Road bordering Sy. No. 80/2; and **South:** Residential Quarters of CBCI Society for Medical Education (St. John's Medical College).
SCHEDULE 'B'
All that Residential Apartment bearing No.502 in 4th floor of Block "DEODAR" of the project "PRESTIGE ST. JOHN'S WOOD", and apartment measuring 1744 Sq. Feet of super built up area approximately inclusive of proportionate share in common areas of common areas such as passages, lobbies, lifts, staircases and other areas of common use with One Covered Car Parking Space in the Basement Floor and the Apartment is bounded by:
East: Open towards Internal Road in 'PRESTIGE ST. JOHN'S WOOD'; **West:** Open towards Open Space in 'DEODAR' Block of 'PRESTIGE ST. JOHN'S WOOD'; **North:** Entrance Corridor and Apartment No. 501 in 4th Floor of 'DEODAR' Block in 'PRESTIGE ST. JOHN'S WOOD'; and **South:** Open towards Open Space in 'DEODAR' Block and thereafter Open towards Internal Road in 'PRESTIGE ST. JOHN'S WOOD'.
The walls are built out of Hollow Brick and Cement with RCC Roofing and Marble Flooring. It is provided with amenities like electricity, water and sanitary connections. The wood used is Honne/Teak and windows of anodised aluminium panels.
Madhusudhana Reddy.R
Anusha.R,
Advocates, Trinetra and Partners
'Trinetra' No. 209, 2nd Floor, Mota Chambers
No. 9, Cunningham Road, Bangalore – 560 052
Ph : : 9900062200 / 8892138853
email : trinetralegal@gmail.com

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
(TIRUCHCHIRAPPALLI DIVISION)
E-TENDER NOTICE No. T-SG-36-I-Puncom-24-25 & T-SG-36-I-Webfil-24-25, Dated: 08.04.2024

For and on behalf of The President of India, Sr. Divisional Signal & Telecommunication Engineer, Southern Railway, Tiruchchirappalli invites online tender for the following work up to **14.00 hrs** on **30.04.2024**

Item No.	Tender Notice No.	Name of the Works
1	T-SG-36-I-Puncom-24-25	Repair Contract for the defective cards of PD MUX of Puncom Make over TPJ Division
2	T-SG-36-I-Webfil-24-25	Repair Contract for the defective cards of PD MUX of Webfil Make over TPJ Divison

Item No.	Cash Value in Lakhs of (₹)	Earnest Money Deposit (₹)	Validity Offer	Date and Time of Closing	Period of Completion in months
1	28.92 Lakhs	57,800/-	60 Days	on 30.04.2024 at 14:00 Hrs	12 Months
2	5.79 Lakhs	11,600/-	60 Days	on 30.04.2024 at 14:00 Hrs	12 Months

If the date of opening of tenders happens to be a declared holiday at a later date, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at the stipulated time.
The detailed Tender Notice, Tender document along with terms & conditions and if any corrigendum to tender is issued can be accessed through **https://www.ireps.gov.in** GST will apply as per extent norms of GOI.
Tender document along with terms & conditions and if any corrigendum to tender is issued.

BRUHAT BENGALURU MAHANAGARA PALIKE
Office of the Additional District Election Officer, BBMP North, Mayohall, 10th Floor, M.G. Road, Bengaluru - 560001.
No: ADEO(N)/TEND/07/2023-24 Date: 11-04-2024
INVITATION FOR TENDER (IFT)
(Two Cover System) (Through GOK KPP Portal only)
Additional District Election Officer, BBMP (North), Bengaluru invites Tenders from eligible Tenderers for the services detailed below.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work
	Supply of Catering Service to below Assembly Constituency for Election Training, Mustering and De-Mustering Center and Other Places as directed by Additional District Election Officer under the Jurisdiction of ADEO, BBMP (North) for Lok Sabha General Election 2024.
1	Hebbal Assembly Constituency. **(4th Call) - Approximated Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 19.97, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 39,940.00**
2	Pulikeshinagara Assembly Constituency. **(4th Call) - Approximated Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 16.82, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 33,640.00**
3	Sarvagna Nagara Assembly Constituency. **(4th Call) - Approximated Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 24.66, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 49,330.00**
4	C.V. Raman Nagara Assembly Constituency. **(4th Call) - Approximated Amount Put to Tender (Rs. in Lakhs): 17.91, EMD Amount (in Rs.): 35,820.00**

Calendar of Events: **1)** Tender Documents can be downloaded from the GOK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in from 12-04-2024, 16.00 Hours. 2)** Pre Bid Meeting will be held on **15-04-2024, 3.00 PM at the Office of the Joint Commissioner, East Zone. 3)** Last Date and Time for Receipt of Tenders is **19-04-2024 upto 4.00 PM. 4)** Date of Opening of Technical Bid: **20-04-2024 at 4.30 PM. 5)** Date of Opening of Financial Bid **after Technical Bid Approval.** Further details can be had from the above office.
Sd/- Additional District Election Officer, BBMP (North).

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME
I, SALEEM Pasha Mohamed Jaffer, R/at No.807, 16th A Cross, Behind Noor Masjid, 9th Main Road, 3rd Block, Jayanagar, Bengaluru-560041, have changed my name from Saleem Pasha Mohamed Jaffer to Saleem Pasha vide affidavit dated 11/04/2024 before Notary K.V.Mani, Bengaluru.

BUSINESS OFFERS
INVESTORS REQUIRED
M SAND
JALLI CRUSHER & ALLIED
PRODUCTIONS REQUIRED
INVESTORS @ TN
(0) 93398 90001
mynewindia25@gmail.com

PUBLIC NOTICE

The general public is hereby informed that my client is intended to purchase the below mention property from its **owner Mr Shivaji Rao Rama Rao Choudhari S/o Late Ramappa.H.Choudhari,** Aged about 70 years ,currently residing at #20 Lakshmi nivas, 6th cross, 1st main, Sultan palya, manorayan palya , R T Nagar , VTC , Bangalore North, 560032.
If anybody having any objection, claim, interest,dispute,for the above intended sale transaction, he/she/they may contact the undersigned with the documentary proof sustaining their objection /claim / dispute within seven (7) days from this day of publication, failing which my client will proceed with the sale transaction with the above owner as if their is no objection /claim/ dispute on the schedule property, and thereafter no claims / disputes /objections shall not be entertained **Schedule property Residential Vacant Site no : 2 & 3 , VP Khata No 64, situated at Syno 105/2 of Hongasandra village,** , Begur Hobli , Bangalore South Taluk, Measuring East to west 40+58 /2 and North to south 59 +65 / 2 , totally measuring to 3038 sqft vacant land, comes under BBMP ward no 189 of Hongasandra ,Bangalore, having property ID: 64/2,3 . Bangalore **Sd /-**
Mr Khaja Samiullah haruni
Ph +91 8123801142
samiharuni@gmail.com
ThroughJSR Associates ,
Hsr layout, Bangalore
Dated 12-04-2024

EDUCATIONAL
GENERAL

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE
DEATH ANNIVERSARIES

3RD DEATH ANNIVERSARY
He will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces;
he will remove his people's disgrace from all the earth.
- isaiah 25:8

In Loving Memory of
Ln.Dr.S. Leenus
14.12.1955 12.04.2021
Husband of
REGIS MARY
Grand dad of
RACHAEL JOANNA

LONDON

Assange's wife hails 'good sign' as Biden mulls dropping his case

AP

Julian Assange's wife said on Thursday it was a "good sign" that U.S. President Joe Biden was "considering" dropping the WikiLeaks founder's prosecution, five years on from his detention. Australia's parliament passed a motion in February with the PM's support calling for an end to the legal saga surrounding Assange. AFP

NEW YORK

Kremlin foe Navalny's posthumous memoir to be released in October

AP

Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's posthumous memoir will be released in October, chronicling his 2020 poisoning and life in a brutal Russian prison camp. The key opponent of Russian leader Vladimir Putin died in February in a penal colony. Titled *Patriot*, the book will be released on October 22, publisher Knopf said. AFP

BEIJING

China sanctions two U.S. firms for supporting arms sales to Taiwan

AP

China on Thursday announced rare sanctions against two U.S. defence companies over what it called their support for arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy Beijing claims. The announcement freezes the assets of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and General Dynamics Land Systems held within China. AP

HO CHI MINH CITY

Vietnam property tycoon gets death in multi-billion dollar fraud

AFP

A top Vietnamese property tycoon was sentenced to death on Thursday in one of the biggest corruption cases in history, with an estimated $27 billion in damages. Truong My Lan, chair of major developer Van Thinh Phat, was found guilty of swindling cash from Saigon Commercial Bank (SCB) over a decade. AFP

Ukraine MPs adopt law for Army mobilisation

Agence France-Presse
KYIV

Ukrainian lawmakers approved on Thursday an Army mobilisation Bill that sparked anger after it was stripped of provisions allowing long-serving soldiers to be discharged.

The Bill was opposed for months by many in a country increasingly exhausted by war.

Facing pressure from Army, lawmakers had a day earlier scrapped a clause that would have allowed soldiers fighting for more than 36 months to return home. Soldiers at the front said they were in "shock" about the demobilisation clause being ditched. The Bill, which needs to be signed into law by Mr. Zelenskyy, will strengthen punishments for draft dodgers and sets out new procedures for troop call-ups.

Israel on alert after Iranian threat as Gaza war grinds on

Prepared for challenges from arenas other than Gaza, says Netanyahu as Biden vows ironclad support for its top regional ally; Russia, Germany call for restraint, implement safety measures

Agence France-Presse
GAZA STRIP

Israel was on alert Thursday after its arch-foe Iran threatened reprisals over a strike in Syria this month that killed two Iranian generals, and as the war against Hamas ground on in Gaza.

Days after Israel strengthened its air defences and paused leave for combat units, the U.S. also warned of the risk of an attack by Iran or its allied groups at a time tensions have soared in West Asia.

Iran is "threatening to launch a significant attack on Israel," U.S. President Joe Biden said on Wednesday, pledging "ironclad" support for its top regional ally despite diplomatic tensions over Israel's military conduct in Gaza.

On the go: Displaced Palestinians leave southern Gaza's Rafah in a jam-packed car, heading for the Khan Younis area on Thursday. AFP

Israel was widely blamed for an April 1 attack that destroyed Iran's consulate building in Damascus and killed seven Revolutionary Guards, including two generals.

During a visit to an airbase in central Israel, the Prime Minister spoke of "challenging times" on multiple fronts.

"We are in the middle of the war in Gaza which continues in full force... but we are also preparing for scenarios of challenges from other arenas," Mr. Netanyahu said in comments released by his office

Moscow called on both Iran and Israel to exercise restraint, after earlier warning Russians to refrain from travelling to Israel, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories.

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock on X, formerly Twitter, urged "maximum restraint", and Lufthansa said it had extended a temporary suspension of Iran flights until Saturday.

Regional tensions have been stoked by the Gaza war which broke out after Hamas launched their October 7 attack against Israel, which left 1,170 people dead.

Palestinian militants also took about 250 hostages, 129 of whom remain in Gaza.

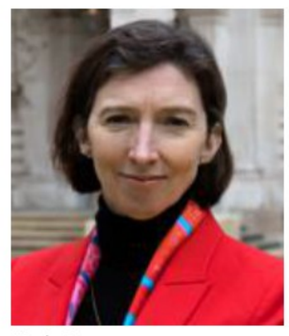
Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed at least 33,545 people in Gaza.

Lindy Cameron, U.K. cyber security czar, to be next High Commissioner to India

Sriram Lakshman
LONDON

Head of the U.K. National Cyber Security Centre Lindy Cameron has been appointed British High Commissioner to India, the U.K. government announced on April 11. Ms. Cameron, who is a West Asia, North Africa and Afghanistan hand replaces Alex Ellis, who just completed three years in New Delhi, and is expected to take up her new role this month.

Prior to her role as the U.K.'s cyber security chief, Ms. Cameron was the Director General of the U.K.'s Northern Ireland Office. She has also held director-level roles overseeing operations of the Department for International Developments in West Asia, North Africa, as well as the department's conflict and security divisions.



Lindy Cameron

Ms. Cameron also worked in Helmand, Afghanistan, in 2009-10, leading a provincial reconstruction team, as per her official résumé. Her current office , which oversees the U.K.'s cyber security environment, is a subsidiary of GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), the British government's intelligence centre.

Ms. Cameron's appointment in New Delhi – the first woman to hold the post – comes on the eve of the general elections in India and months ahead of a general election in the U.K.

FTA talks

Her portfolio will involve the free trade agreement negotiations between India and the U.K. The 14th round of trade talks, which began in 2022, was suspended last month due to the Indian elections. Negotiations are expected to resume after the elections and potentially before the U.K. goes to the polls.

Ms. Cameron's new role begins as New Delhi and London are resetting their bilateral relationship, which was marked, in part, by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to London in November 2023. The U.K. is also increasing its defence presence in the Indo-Pacific.

Biden to host Japan, Philippines leaders in bid to counter China

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Joe Biden is bringing together Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida at the White House on Thursday as the three nations use their first-ever trilateral summit to try to show they are in lockstep about countering China's military assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific.

The leaders are expected to announce that their coast guards will hold a joint patrol in the Indo-Pacific this year, a follow-up on law enforcement drills carried out last year by the allies in waters near the disputed South China Sea.

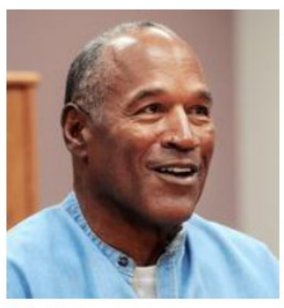
The U.S. Coast Guard will also welcome Filipino and Japanese coast guard members onto a U.S. Coast Guard vessel during the patrol for training.

Controversial U.S. football star O.J. Simpson dies

Reuters
WASHINGTON

O.J. Simpson, the American football star and actor who was acquitted in a sensational 1995 trial of murdering his former wife but was found responsible for her death in a civil lawsuit and was later imprisoned for armed robbery and kidnapping, has died at 76.

Simpson, cleared by a Los Angeles jury in what the U.S. media called "the trial of the century," had died on Wednesday after a battle with cancer, his family said on Thursday.



O.J. Simpson

Simpson avoided prison when he was found not guilty in the 1994 stabbing deaths of former wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ronald Goldman in Los Angeles. Simpson later served nine years in a Nevada prison after being convicted in 2008 on 12 counts of armed robbery and kidnapping two sports memorabilia dealers at gunpoint in a Las Vegas hotel.

Nicknamed "The Juice," Simpson was one of the best and most popular athletes of the late 1960s and 1970s. He overcame childhood infirmity to become an electrifying running back at the University of Southern California and won the Heisman Trophy as college football's top player. After a record-setting career in the NFL with the Buffalo Bills and San Francisco 49ers, he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

Simpson parlayed his football stardom into a career as a sportscaster, advertising pitchman and Hollywood actor.

The downfall

All that changed after Nicole Brown Simpson and Goldman were found fatally slashed outside her Los Angeles home on June 12, 1994.

Simpson quickly emerged as a suspect. He was ordered to surrender to police but five days after the killings, he fled in his white Ford Bronco with a former teammate. A slow-speed chase through the Los Angeles area ended at Simpson's mansion and he was later charged in the murders.

What ensued was one of the most notorious trials in 20th century America and a media circus. It had everything: a rich celebrity defendant; a Black man accused of killing his white former wife out of jealousy; a woman slain after divorcing a man who had beaten her; a "dream team" of pricy and charismatic defense lawyers; and a huge gaffe by prosecutors.

Meta turns to AI to protect minors from 'sextortion'

Agence France-Presse
PARIS

Meta said on Thursday the company was developing new tools to protect teenage users from "sextortion" scams on its Instagram platform.

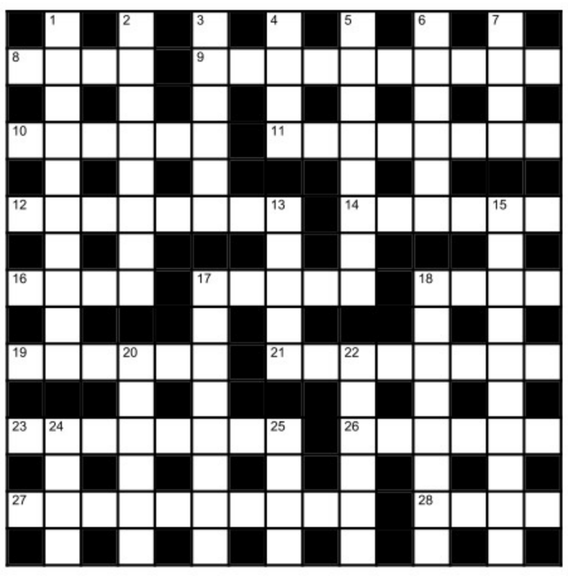
Meta said it was testing an AI-driven "nudity protection" tool that would find and blur images containing nudity that were sent to minors on the app's messaging system.

TH CROSSWORD + 14147

(set by Incognito)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

8 Shoot sack (4)
9 Periodic communication has four directions by property owner giving house on rent (10)
10 Airman at sea in dock (6)
11 RAF left 1 floating, anti-drowning device (4,4)
12 Great! Mel distributed wire! (8)
14 Permits walls to be built around hole (6)
16 Apartment level (4)
17 Where silly ideas may be swept? (5)
18 Inform William the archer (4)
19 For example, girl gets copper plate at first to make an item of tableware (6)
21 After skipping reunions, indecent exposure may be foreseen (8)
23 Conduct dry run on coffin carrier (8)
26 Previous journalist survived (6)
27 Soon, Muscat may produce space travellers (10)
28 Immovable... but moving at high speed? (4)

Down

1 PLA frigate is flying a standard with skull and crossbones (6,4)
2 Horribly inept ward is sorry (8)
3 United Nations exposition is partial (6)
4 French leave part of raw olives (4)
5 8 having gone out of the romance, she ain't hot anymore (3,5)
6 Master Oliver's having alcohol (6)
7 Boy returns charge for meat (4)
13 Corn labyrinth one is trapped in (5)
15 Prepare edible stew for animal (10)
17 Endlessly hoping to get small tablets for headache (8)
18 Checks and scolds (5,3)
20 In empty cannery, place a quantity of paper that's greasy (6)
22 North European, but can be French too (6)
24 In Greece, Cupid rose awkwardly (4)
25 Setter rejected American birds (4)

SUDOKU

4		9	2	3		7		
	3		4					
	1	8			7			
5				1			4	6
		6		9		5		
1	8			7				3
			9			3	1	
					5		9	
		1		6	3	2		8

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

No.SS6126 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

Solution to previous puzzle

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

1	7	4	5	8	3	6	2	9
9	5	2	4	6	7	3	1	8
6	8	3	1	2	9	5	4	7
3	4	7	8	1	2	9	5	6
5	2	9	3	7	6	1	8	4
8	1	6	9	4	5	7	3	2
7	6	8	2	5	1	4	9	3
2	9	1	6	3	4	8	7	5
4	3	5	7	9	8	2	6	1

FAITH

Doctrine of surrender

Maharshi Valmiki asked sage Narada who among the heroes of this world is the highest in virtue and wisdom. Sri Rangan Swamy said in a discourse that Valmiki did not ask about Rama's qualities. Lord Narayana responded to the elephant Gajendra who called Him "Adhimoolame". Similarly, Valmiki enquired, keeping in mind Lord Rama's supremacy (Parathvam).

We must surrender to the supreme being with the power and capacity to protect us. This is called "Gopthruthvam," an essential feature of the doctrine of surrender.

The foremost of all the divine qualities of God is to extend Abhayam or asylum to those who surrender. Sri Rama had shown this throughout Ramayana.

Lakshmana surrendered at Rama's feet to go to the forest with Him. There can be no better servitude than Lakshmana's, who had the fortune to serve Rama for 14 years.

Bharatha placed the sandals of Rama and ruled the kingdom as an agent. He was the best example of surrender that a person should remove the concept of "I" and "Mine". Bharatha said, "Myself and the kingdom belong to Rama" (*Rajyam cha Aham cha Ramasya*).

Lord Rama assured all the sages that He would save them from ogres.

IN THE LIMELIGHT

Caste and cinema: the long shadow of Amar Singh Chamkila

Ahead of the streaming of Chamkila's biopic, a look at how his ethnic identity informed his music that continues to be relevant three decades after he was silenced along with his partner

Anuj Kumar

Amidst the ongoing debate on whether maestro A.R. Rahman and ace director Imtiaz Ali have justified the earthy flavour and emotional flux of Amar Singh Chamkila's music in the upcoming biopic of the phenomenal Punjabi singer, the discussion about the role of Chamkila's ethnic identity in shaping his art has resurfaced.

A section on social media has questioned Diljit Dosanjh for removing the turban to play Chamkila, a Dalit Sikh. They remind the artist who normalised a turbaned hero in Hindi cinema for turning back on his statement where he promised not to lose his turban for a film role.

Those who believe in cinematic *dharma*, however, feel that the actor has done the right thing by keeping his look as close to the character as possible. The previous attempts to capture the artist's journey, one of which featured Diljit in a turban (*Jodi*, 2023), were fictionalised accounts because the makers didn't have the right to film Chamkila's biopic.

Actors adopting and removing the religious and social symbols of their characters are quite common in Hindi cinema. In the past, we have seen Aamir Khan sporting a vermillion tika and the sacred thread in Ketan Mehta's *Mangal Pandey: The Rising* and Paresh Rawal performed namaz as a devout Muslim mechanic Hashmatullah in Amit Rai's *Road To Sangam*. Way back in 1936, Devika Rani, the biggest star of the time, played an untouchable in Franz Osten's *Achhut Kanya*. In Ali Abbas Zafar's *Jogi* (2022), Diljit cuts his hair on-screen to depict the plight of Sikhs during the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi. Nobody objected. So, has it something to do with Diljit's previous statement or is it about him playing a Ravidasia Sikh?

Parineeti Chopra, Diljit Dosanjh in *Amar Singh Chamkila*. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Multiple endings

Like most absorbing narratives, Chamkila's story allows for multiple endings. His assassination at the age of 27 along with his singer-wife Amarjot Kaur and his two associates evoked multiple conspiracy theories. Was he eliminated by the separatists who felt he was polluting the minds of the young generation with his 'obscene songs'? Was he killed by his rivals, who felt threatened by his numero uno status in the Punjabi music industry? Or did he pay the price for marrying a Jatt Sikh girl who moved out of her first marriage to pursue her singing career?

In all three possibilities, the role of his caste identity, a Dalit's control over resources, can't be denied. Were his songs seen as the other's reflection on the ways of a socially influential class, going through a process of purification in the 1980s? Not even an FIR was registered in the case. Around the same time, two leftist poets, Jaimal Singh Padda and Avtar Singh Sandhu, were also killed for speaking for the rights of workers at a time when religious extremism was on a high. A decade ago, Anurag Kashyap was actively considering making a film on Pash with Irrfan but it could not materialise.

Recently, a noted filmmaker from the region told this journalist that though Guru Gobind Singh asked his followers to submerge their caste identities into neutral surnames like Singh and Kaur, flaunting caste surnames is an everyday reality in Punjab. "We know there are still gurudwaras with two entrances and in many villages, there is a clear demarcation between upper caste and Dalit households," he said.

The State has seen Dalit Sikhs in both top political as well as temporal positions but political observers have, over the years, brought out the socio-economic fallout of the Green Revolution where landless Dalit workers faced exploitation at the hands of Jatt Sikh land owners.

The Jatt-dominated Punjabi film industry has not been able to map this heterogeneity of Punjab's society where almost 32% of the population comes from Scheduled Caste groups. Like in Hindi cinema, Dalits have remained on the margins. In recent times, we have stray examples like Gurvinder Singh's *Anhey Ghorey Da Daan* (*Alms for a Blind Horse*, 2011) that depicted the plight of the rural working class finding widespread critical acclaim. Another art house attempt was Kabir Singh Chowdhry's mockumentary *Mehsampur* which also drew inspiration from Chamkila's life. The short film *Chamm* (skin) tells the story of a Dalit worker in a slaughterhouse.

Strange shapes of entertainment

History tells us entertainment can take strange shapes in times of repression. Chamkila reflected on the poor farm workers but seldom talked of the matters of his caste in his songs. He commented on Jatt pride and *Jatt Ki Dushmani* (hostility of Jatt), perhaps to stay afloat in the mainstream. A multi-faceted artist who wrote, composed, and sang his songs, Chamkila offered a commentary through music on illicit relationships, alcohol, dowry, domestic violence, and drug abuse in a feudal society. These themes were present under the ribaldry of his popular lyrics. In his popular song '*Lalkara*', the girl accepts the substance addiction of her lover, something that is not permitted by religion. In the suggestive '*Mar Le Hor Try Jija*', the sister-in-law of an aging man is pushing him to have a son with her when he says her sister is no longer fertile. Both songs capture the dark reality of the feudal society albeit in a harmless, playful manner.

Prof. Krantipal, who teaches Punjabi at the Department of Modern Indian Languages at the Aligarh Muslim University, says that Chamkila, through his songs, also hinted at how the landlord maintains social distance from the worker but likes to spend time with his wife. Shyam Benegal's debut feature *Ankur* (1974) also explores the same theme in a different setting with a serious gaze. Later, this interplay of exploitation and surrender was exposed in Govind Nihalani's *Aakrosh* (1980) and Gautam Ghose's *Paar* (1984).

In Punjab, culture is often a by-product of agriculture. An *akhada* is used to describe a dedicated space for a wrestling bout as well as a musical performance in an open-air concert where Chamkila found his stardom. "Athleticism and aesthetics are conjoined in the region," says Prof. Pal.

There must be something in the music of Chamkila, he says, that has kept his songs relevant even three decades after his death. "The *sadagi* (simplicity) and *ravangi* (coherent flow) in his earthy music and his audience connect are unmatched," he says. With a tumbi in hand backed by a harmonium and dholak and accompanied by alghoza, chimta and flute, he would create magic with a basic sound system in his live shows, and his albums kept the truck driver going with the freshness of their lilt and lyrics.

Many songs of the folk artist present a strong picture of a woman in control of her desire. She taunts her lover as impotent if he is unable to cross the physical barriers to unite with her.

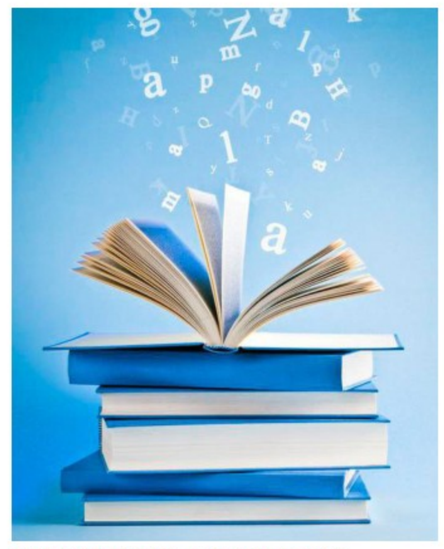
Breaking the barriers

Old-timers say Chamkila's songs created the image of a goodly woman, someone like Mumtaz who was in great demand when Chamkila was sharpening his skills. His lyrics evoke a strong woman who not only performed household chores but also contributed to farming. His concerts had a butch vibe to them. Still, his double-meaning songs broke the patriarchal barriers. They reached the kitchens and living rooms through tape recorders and found a loyal fan base among women seeking to find a new idiom to the naughty folk songs they grew up singing at weddings and childbirth ceremonies.

Hoping that the buzz around the film spurs interest in the stories of Punjab and folk instruments, Prof. Pal says illicit relationships have been a common theme in Punjabi literature from medieval times and Chamkila only brought it out in the open. It reflects the social undercurrents of the border state where farmer, soldier, and driver have been principal occupations over centuries. When men are out for months, it provides opportunities and circumstances for both genders to indulge in making bonds that are considered forbidden.

"Many times it is the illicit relationship that is considered the real relationship because you share your deepest emotions with someone you truly bond with. In the epic Sohni Mahiwal story, Sohni is married to a man she despises and swims across the river to meet Mahiwal who has to disguise himself to meet her love. Illegitimate relations find space in Jnanpith awardee Gurdial Singh's works; it is also there in Shiv Kumar Batalvi's poetry."

Chamkila's imagery is not layered or polished. It is out there, which made him connect with the rural folk. They found in his songs their reflection. His symbolism is not shrouded in mystical allegory, but that doesn't mean it is irrelevant. As Prof. Pal says, Chamkila's poetry may not be progressive in classical terms but it is not "*lachchar*" (base) either. Unfortunately, the current generation is trying to fit his glitter into one of the two boxes.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

'Countermand' means 'cancel (a command or order already given), especially by giving a new and opposite one.' It is a formal word. It is a combination of 'counter' and 'mandare,' meaning 'to order.' 'Mandate' is from the same root 'mandare.' It also is a formal word.

A mandate is 'an official command or instruction by an authority.' It is a Presidential mandate. A request from a Governor is a mandate. You have to reply to this letter; a reply is mandatory. 'Mandate' and 'countermand' can be used as a noun and a verb.

The General ordered the army to march against the enemy. He countermanded his order subsequently.

'Countermand' is not a new word. It was used as early as the 15th century. It was originally a military term. It is still used by the armed forces.

I care a pin for him; I don't care a pin for him. (S. N. Ramaswamy, Madras).

It is 'I don't care a pin for him.' It means I don't care for him in the least. 'I don't care twopence for him,' 'I don't care a jot for him,' 'I don't care two hoots for him' also mean the same.

Diamond jubilee, the 60th year of an event or the 75th year (Jai Singh Jain, Madras).

There was a time when it was used only to refer to the 60th anniversary. Now it is also used to refer to the 75th anniversary. Only a couple of dictionaries have recorded that it could also refer to the 71st anniversary. The names for wedding anniversaries are: first: Cotton Wedding; second: Paper Wedding; third: Leather Wedding; fourth: Flower or Fruit Wedding; fifth: Wooden Wedding; sixth: Iron or Sugar Candy Wedding; seventh: Woollen Wedding; eighth: Bronze or Electrical Appliances Wedding; ninth: Copper or Pottery Wedding; tenth: Tin Wedding; eleventh: Steel Wedding; twelfth: Silk and Fine Linen Wedding; thirteenth: Lace Wedding; fourteenth: Ivory Wedding; fifteenth: Crystal Wedding; twentieth: China Wedding; twenty-fifth: Silver Wedding; thirtieth: Pearl Wedding; thirty-fifth: Coral Wedding; fortieth: Ruby Wedding; forty-fifth: Sapphire Wedding; fiftieth: Golden Wedding; fifty-fifth: Emerald Wedding; sixtieth: Diamond Wedding; seventy-fifth: Diamond Wedding. The names indicate the kind of gifts suitable for the occasion!

Hysteron proteron (S. K. Shukla, Meerut).

'Hysteron proteron' is a figure of speech in which the word that should come last is put first. It is something which goes against the natural order. He conquered! He saw! He came! It is from the Greek 'hysteron proteron', meaning 'the latter (put in the place of the former'. I die! I faint! 1 fall!)

Synonyms for sad (S. K. Barua, Dibrugarh).

Pensive, mournful, sorry, distressed, grief-stricken, unhappy, miserable, cheerless, woebegone, wretched, tragic.

Published in The Hindu on 10 December, 1991

THE DAILY QUIZ

Ramzan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar and is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting. Here is a quiz on Ramzan

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

Venkataraghavan Srinivasan

QUESTION 1
The meal to break the fast during the holy month of Ramzan is called Iftaar, What is the meal before the beginning of the fast called?

QUESTION 2
According to the Islamic tradition, On which day of Ramzan did the Prophet Muhammad receive the first revelations of the Quran?

QUESTION 3
Where was Prophet Muhammad born?

QUESTION 4
In which month of the Islamic calendar is Ramzan?

QUESTION 5
What is the first prayer of the day called?

Visual Question:
By what name is the traditional lantern used during Ramzan called? These are bright, colourful hanging lamps that are used to decorate homes and streets during Ramzan. GETTY IMAGES

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz:
1. This Tamil political Satire is set in the backdrop of a village panchayat election in which the local barber's vote will determine the winner of the election, the movie starring Yogi Babu and Directed by Madonne Ashwin came as a refreshing movie. Name the movie. **Ans: *Mandela***
2. This compelling Indian black comedy drama released in the year 2017, is about a government clerk on election duty in a conflict-ridden jungle of Central India. Name this movie directed by Amrit Masur and Starring Rajkumar Rao & Pankaj Tripathi. **Ans: *Newton***
3. Who was the Director of the 1975 Movie *Aandhi.* It was also one of the first movies about women in electoral politics. **Ans: Gulzaar**
4. This author's novel is the 2001 Kannada movie *Mathadana*, a unique political drama film. **Ans: S.L.Bhyrappa**
5. This Malayalam movie released in the year 1990 was loosely based on the real life story of Thomas Vaidyan, Gowri Amma and Thomas Vaidyan. Name the movie. **Ans: *Lal Salam***

Visual: Identify the movie. **Ans: *Iruvar***

Early Birds: Rajmohan V | Jyot Prakash Gulati | Rochish Tirumala | Lekshmy Harikumar | Saheni George

Word of the day

Grisly:
shockingly repellent; inspiring horror

Synonyms: awful, ghastly, hideous

Usage: *The town was shaken by a series of grisly crimes.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/grislypro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /grízlɪj/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Gruha Jyothi beneficiaries down by 50K in city in Feb. as heat ups consumption

The numbers might also be impacted by tenants cancelling their subscription to the scheme while shifting houses

Jahnavi T. R.
BENGALURU

The sweltering heat in Bengaluru has driven up electricity bills this summer.

While many consumers have noticed that their electricity consumption has gone up by at least 50 units in the last two months, data from the Energy Department shows that the beneficiaries of Gruha Jyothi scheme in February were lower by 50,000 when compared to January in the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company's (Bescom) Bengaluru Metropolitan Area Zone (BMAZ).

In January 2024, a total of 32,30,746 domestic installations benefited from the government's flagship Gruha Jyothi scheme, under which consumers who utilise up to 200 units of electricity get a zero bill. In February 2024, 31,80,604 domestic installations benefitted from the scheme, which shows a difference of 50,142 beneficiaries.

People gather to register for Gruha Jyothi scheme at Rajarajeshwarinagar Bescom office, in Bengaluru. FILE PHOTO

The subsidy amount for January was ₹221.96 crore whereas for February, it was ₹213.80 crore.

"The main reason for the slight dip in the number of beneficiaries is the heat in Bengaluru. The usage of fan and air-conditioners (ACs) increased, which meant more consumption of electricity. Those who were on the border of the Gruha Jyothi limit, like in 190s (units), crossed to the other side. However, once the summer months are done and their consumption comes back under 200 units, the benefits of the scheme will continue to be applicable to them," said a senior official from Bescom. "The numbers might also be impacted by tenants cancelling their subscription to the scheme while shifting houses, and re-subscription was in process."

Consumers who have exceeded their average consumption agree that heat has played a key role in increased power usage.

"Until January, my consumption was around 130 - 150 units every month, and I used to get Gruha Jyothi benefits. But in February and March, my consumption crossed 200 units, as we run two ACs in our household. I am sure that once it starts raining, our consumption will come back to normal," said Surendranath K., a resident of Doddabommasandra.

"While the demand in Bescom region was 8,128 Mega Watts (MW) in February, it was around 8,300 MW in March. In March 2023, the demand was 7,740 MW. The demand is expected to go up to 8,500 MW in April and May," said K.J. George, Energy Minister.

As on March 24, the number of Gruha Jyothi registrations across Karnataka stood at 1.67 crore, which is 85.87% of the total LT consumers (1.95 crore).

"The Energy Department has taken all the necessary steps to ensure the Gruha Jyothi scheme has reached people across rural and urban Karnataka, and uplifted their lives in a significant manner," Mr. George said.

No. of domestic installations that benefited from Gruha Jyothi in BMAZ

January	32,30,746
February	31,80,604

Electricity demand in Bescom region

February	8,128 MW
March	8,200 – 8,300 MW
April – May (expected)	8,400 – 8,500 MW

INBRIEF

Bengaluru's largest cinema is now at Phoenix Mall of Asia

PVR INOX, a premium cinema exhibitor in India, announced the launch of what it called Bengaluru's largest cinema at Phoenix Mall of Asia and its largest cinema in the South, on Thursday. The 14-screen megaplex features three premium formats - MX4D, ScreenX, and Insignia. PVR INOX also introduces the first MX4D, the immersive 4D movie experience and ScreenX, 270-degree cinema viewing in South India, said the company. The new cinema, which has a seating capacity of 1997, will augment PVR INOX' foothold in Bengaluru with 172 screens in 26 cinemas and in Karnataka with 219 screens in 37 cinemas.

Software engineer robbed at residence in Aduru village

A techie was robbed at knifepoint at his residence late on Wednesday at Rampura Road in Aduru village in Avalahalli police station limits. The police registered a case and have launched a search for the accused.

They said four to five robbers broke into the house of software engineer Gagan Kumar, and held him at knifepoint. The accused robbed a mobile phone, laptop, gold ring, gold chain weighing 20 g and forced him to transfer ₹1.2 lakh from a payment app.

The techie woke up when the robbers broke in after which one of them held him at knifepoint. The police said they are looking at CCTV cameras and have narrowed down on the accused.

AICTE-Inter-Institutional Biomedical Innovations Programme launched

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP) launched the AICTE-Inter-Institutional Biomedical Innovations Programme (IBIP) to promote interdisciplinary education, research and innovations between medical and engineering institutions.

An MoU has been signed between C-CAMP and the All India Council for Technical Education in this regard. The programme is the collective endeavour of the two to promote accessible, affordable and quality healthcare to all, making health and lives better.

C-CAMP said that the objective is to facilitate engineering and medical graduates, postgraduates and faculty members to jointly work on challenges from the medical domain. Beside imparting multidisciplinary education and research, the initiative will also prompt and prepare them for entrepreneurship particularly in the healthcare sector. It will also offer a structured Bio Entrepreneurship Didactic course online.

AICTE Chairman T.G. Sitharam said the collaboration between engineering and medical students will foster creativity, innovation, and a deeper understanding of the complex challenges in healthcare. "By leveraging their complementary skills and knowledge, students from both disciplines can develop impactful solutions that improve patient care and advance medicine," he said.

Under IBIP, AICTE will provide a grant-in-aid of ₹10 lakh against a matching contribution from the institution to develop and implement at least 10 ideas and innovations to address the challenges posed by the healthcare domain. All the institutions selected for AICTE-IBIP will become part of a network of all sanctioned projects to learn from each other, collaborate and enhance their performance.

C-CAMP, through its flagship programme will mentor, mediate, support AICTE-IBIP and hold an event to inform faculty and students of medical and engineering institutes of the benefits of the programme.

Text & Context and Science

Weekday features on *The Hindu* epaper (epaper.thehindu.com) carries explainers, special articles and quizzes. In the latest issue (April 12, Friday), the following articles are available:

- ISRO's 'zero orbital debris' milestone **bit.ly/zeroorbitaldebris**
- Crafted in Indian labs, NexCAR19 takes India to next level in cancer care **bit.ly/cancercareindia**

You can use your smartphone's inbuilt features to access these articles. If it's an Android phone, use Google Lens to read and tap the url to access an article. If it's an iPhone, use Live Text on camera to do the same.

The pangolin being rescued on the AIISH campus in Mysuru on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Pangolin rescued

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

A pangolin, an endangered species, that was sighted in the campus of All India Institute of Speech and Hearing in Mysuru was rescued on Thursday.

A forest team rushed to the campus after being informed about the sighting of the mammal by the staff.

It was rescued and later released in the nearby forest, according to reports.

Digital database on Indian flora launched

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Sankara Rao, Visiting Professor and Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Ecological Sciences (CES), IISc, launched "India Flora Online", a digital database at the IISc recently.

The database, India's most comprehensive attempt to document its plant wealth, "fulfils the country's need of bringing the country's plant or floral wealth into one searchable source," said Prof. Rao, in an earlier interview with *The Hindu*. "It is the culmination of many years of hard work," said Usha Vijayaraghavan, Dean, Biological Sciences, IISc., at the launch. She added that the initiative builds on the individual collection of Fr. Cecil Saldanha, who worked at CES in the 80s.

Prof. Rao said, "Access to information on plants creates a sense of connection with nature which is necessary. We do not know as much as we think we know about the floral diversity in our country."

Evolutionary ecologist and conservation biologist Kamal Bawa, founder ATREE, commended Prof. Rao's work and remarked: "This effort is going to result in a resurgence of interest in plant biology in India."

Girl from orphanage excels in II PU exam

Jayanth R.
BENGALURU

Poverty and one's family background do not always hinder educational achievement, as N. Sonu, an orphan, has proved. Sonu, who lives in 'Makkala Dhama' of Sparsha Trust at Devanahalli, Bengaluru Rural District, secured 87.66% marks in II PU Science stream this year and hopes to become a software engineer.

Sonu SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ten years ago, she was begging with her father in front of Gundanjaneya Temple at Sanjeevanagar, Hebbal. At five, she had migrated to Bengaluru with her father after her mother's demise ten years ago. They stayed on the outskirts of the city and depended on construction work for livelihood.

Following complaints of her father assaulting her in an inebriated state by the neighbours to the police, her father took her and shifted to Gundanjaneya Temple at Sanjeevanagar in the city. Both of them started begging in front of the temple and took shelter there at night.

A volunteer from Sparsha Trust found the girl in front of the temple while she was begging and rescued her. They spoke to her father and took her to the Trust's residential home. Sonu was admitted directly to Class 3 in the Government Higher Primary school at Sahakar Nagar and she studied there up to Class 8.

However, her father died when she was in Class 8. The Trust took over complete care of Sonu and put her in Vivekananda Vidyavardhaka School for the further studies. She studied Classes 9 and 10 there.

No coaching

Sonu studied PU in Pragathi Girls PU College, Vijayapura, Devanahalli taluk and in the II PU results which were announced on Wednesday, she scored 526 out of 600 without any additional coaching. Incidentally, she had also achieved 602 (96%) marks out of 625 in the Class 10 examination.

"All credits of my achievement should go to Sparsha Trust. I didn't take any tuition and the faculties in our college helped me a lot to get this score. Now I am concentrating on the CET-2024 to get good ranking in the engineering stream. I have a big dream to become a software engineer. I will take up Computer Science Engineering," Sonu said.

Apart from having a good academic track record, she is also good at painting, dancing and sports.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Gopinath, Managing Trustee of the Trust said, "When she came to our residential home ten years ago, we never imagined that she would achieve so much. Sonu is a real achiever and role model for everybody. We will support Sonu to complete her higher education."

Timings
BENGALURU

FRIDAY, APR. 12		
RISE	06:09	SET 18:32
RISE	08:55	SET 22:18
SATURDAY, APR. 13		
RISE	06:08	SET 18:32
RISE	09:51	SET 23:18
SUNDAY, APR. 14		
RISE	06:08	SET 18:32
RISE	10:48	SET 00:00

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	36	25
Mysuru	38	24
Bengaluru	35	23

Bengaluru Today
37°C A dry weather to continue. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
37°C The weather will be dry. Morning will be pleasant with mist and haze. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon.

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THE HINDU
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SAD DEMISE

Smt. SUDHA RAMA SHETTY
W/o Late Dr. R N Shetty
Date of Birth : 17.4.1939

We deeply regret to inform the sad demise of
Smt. Sudha Rama Shetty on Thursday, 11 April 2024

Deeply Mourned by :
Family Members, Relatives & Friends

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Staying cool: A policeman drinks water while standing under the hot sun at Rajarajeshwari Nagar traffic signal, on Mysuru Road in Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

Heat soars and rain disappears in Bengaluru's dry, thirsty summer

Once known as an 'air-conditioned city', Bengaluru saw above normal temperatures in March, and April has been dry so far. It has been a double whammy for citizens also considering the serious water crisis. *Hemanth C.S.* talks to experts on what has led to the soaring temperatures this summer

The festival of Ugadi (New Year as per the Hindu calendar) passed off this year without the customary 'Ugadi *male*' (rains) in Bengaluru. The temperature hovered around 35 degrees Celsius on the festival day on Tuesday, the only solace being that it was a few degrees lower than in the preceding days. Once known by the sobriquet of an 'air-conditioned city', Bengaluru saw the temperature crossing 38 degrees Celsius this April. It has been a double whammy for Bengalureans this summer considering the serious water crisis in the city.

No sign of rain

Though the India Meteorological Department (IMD) had forecast that many parts of Karnataka, including Bengaluru, would witness above-normal maximum temperature during the summer months of March, April, and May, the weather forecaster had also predicted a high probability of above-normal rainfall in March over a few districts of south-interior Karnataka, which includes Bengaluru.

In line with the IMD's forecast, Bengaluru recorded above-normal temperature during March (the normal temperature being 33.4°C) but the city did not receive any rainfall during this period.

On March 29, the IMD's Bengaluru city station recorded a maximum of 36.4°C, which is the highest March temperature in the last five years for the city. A few days later, on April 5, the Kempegowda International Airport's (KIA) weather station recorded a maximum of 38.3°C. The very next day, the Bengaluru city station recorded 37.6°C, which turned out to be the third-highest maximum temperature in the last 15 years for April, and the highest in the last eight years for Bengaluru. The highest-ever temperature recorded for April though was 39.2°C in 2016.

This has been particularly bad for those compelled to work in the sun, like construction workers, delivery executives, pourakarmikas (civic workers), and auto and taxi drivers. It has been so bad that pourakarmika unions have demanded that their working hours be rescheduled for the summer months. While they are expected to work between 6.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m., they have demanded half-day work and breaks in between. They have also asked for eye shades, caps or hats, umbrellas, and other equipment to protect themselves from the heat, in a memorandum submitted to the Urban Development Department and the Department of Municipal Administration. Street vendors have demanded a special allowance for the summer months because their business is down.

> We have aggravated this issue. In present-day Bengaluru, we have 193 waterbodies and most are not managed, as treated sewage and industrial effluents are let in.
>
> **T.V. RAMACHANDRA,** IISc.

Under cover: Street vendors using umbrellas to sell goods at K.R. Market in Bengaluru. K. MURALI KUMAR

Why so bad?

So, what has led to the soaring temperatures and rains eluding the city this summer? Meteorologists attribute it to El Nino conditions. El Nino refers to a band of warmer water spreading from west to east in the equatorial Pacific Ocean. It has had an impact not just on the rising temperatures during the summer months, but also during the last winter season.

"We did not witness an intense winter (December, January, and February) also because of El Nino. Then there is an anti-cyclonic circulation over the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. So we can expect high temperatures. The classical thunderstorm activity has not started in April, so we have not received any rainfall," said A. Prasad, scientist, IMD, Bengaluru.

The last rains

The last time Bengaluru received rainfall was in 2023, and the city has not had any rainfall in over three months. Meteorologists say that January and February are usually considered dry months, and no showers are expected then. However in March, the city usually receives a few spells of rain.

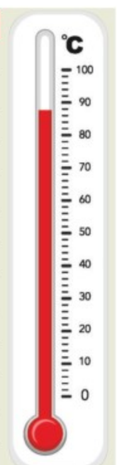
"Traditionally, during January and February, Bengaluru does not receive rainfall. The normal rainfall for January is only 1.6 mm and for February it is 7.1 mm. But for March, it (normal) is 14.7 mm and in April, Bengaluru receives 61.7 mm. We did not receive any rainfall during March, and even if we do receive rainfall in April, it will be below normal," said Prasad.

The IMD, which on April 1 released the 'Updated Seasonal outlook for hot weather season (April to June) 2024' and 'Monthly Outlook for April 2024 for the Rainfall and Temperature,' has already forecast that from April to June, above-normal heatwave days are likely to occur over most parts of the southern peninsula.

"In April, south-interior Karnataka is likely to see below-normal rainfall, and parts of north-interior Karnataka are expected to see above-normal rainfall. The State might experience above-normal maximum temperatures in most parts, including Bengaluru, in April," Prasad said.

Maximum temperature in Bengaluru since 2012 for February, March, and April*

Year	February	March	April
2012	35.2	35.6	37.5
2013	33.4	36.6	36.8
2014	32.7	36	36.7
2015	33.6	35.8	36.5
2016	35.5	36.3	39.2
2017	35.5	37.2	36.7
2018	35.5	35.1	34.9
2019	35.5	37	37
2020	33.1	36.1	36.4
2021	34.1	35.9	37.2
2022	33.4	35.3	36.7
2023	33.2	35.5	36.5
2024	34.5	36.6	37.6*



*Till April 9, 2024 | Source : IMD

The changing landscape

T.V. Ramachandra, coordinator, Energy and Wetlands Research Group, Centre for Ecological Science, Indian Institute of Science (IISc.), said that Bengaluru's changing landscape is one of the primary reasons for the present scenario.

"We have aggravated this problem. For example, in Bengaluru's 740 sqkm region, if you look back in the 1970s, we had 68% vegetation cover and about 8% was paved surface. But today, 86% is paved surface and less than 3% is vegetation cover. If you look at the density of the waterbodies back in 1500 or 1800 during Kempe Gowda's period, we had 1,452 lakes. In present-day Bengaluru, we have 193 waterbodies and most of them are mismanaged, as treated sewage and industrial effluents are let in," Ramachandra said.

He added that greenhouse gasses are also increasing in the city, and one of the reasons is the building architecture, as most of the city's skyscrapers have aped Western architecture by using a glass facade. "Such buildings are ideal for European climate or temperate or cold climates so that you will conserve the heat inside, and you will have thermal comfort. Unfortunately, our architects and civil contractors have copied this architecture and brought it to the Bengaluru environment. In the process, our electricity consumption has gone up. In a normal building if the electricity consumption is between 750 and 1,400 units a person per year, in these glass facade buildings, it is between 14,000 and 70,000 units. The higher the electricity consumption, the higher the greenhouse gasses," Ramachandra said.

Disappearing lakes

Delivering a talk at a seminar on urban management and water supply in 2023, Prakash Chauhan, Director, National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), revealed a set of data. Alarming among them was that around 65 lakes have disappeared in Bengaluru, and the city has seen a temperature increase of about 1.5 degrees Celsius in the last 20 years due to rapid urbanisation.

The Hyderabad-based NRSC is one of the primary centres of the Indian Space Research Organisation with a mandate for establishment of ground stations for receiving satellite data, generation of data products, dissemination to the users, among others.

Chauhan said that one study conducted using Landsat surface temperature data revealed that in the last 25 years in Bengaluru, there was a .35 degree Celsius increase in temperature year-on-year.

"In the last 20 years, the temperature has already increased by about 1.5 degrees Celsius. This is basically associated due to a phenomenon known as the urban heat island effect. This occurs because of emissions not only by vehicular pollution, but also heat which has been reflected by urban bodies like concrete," Chauhan said.

"In Bengaluru, we may get some rainfall on April 12 or 13. We expect some rainfall in May also. It is too early to speak about the monsoon, but El Nino is expected to become neutral in the first half of the monsoon season, so that is good news for us," Prasad said.

In 2023, after an intense summer, Bengaluru received record rainfall during May. In 2023, the city witnessed the wettest May since 1957 as it recorded 301.3 mm (31 cm) of rainfall. The previous highest record for May was in 1957 when 287.1 mm rainfall was recorded. Bengalureans continue to look up to the skies with anticipation.

Raring to go Actor Tabu.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Crew's control

As *Crew* breaches the ₹100 crore mark and Tabu finds herself at the centre of a string of hits, she opens up about her work and staying relevant to audiences

Sangeetha Devi Dundoo
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The Hindi heist comedy *Crew*, which breached the ₹100 crore mark at the box office recently, dispelled notions that post pandemic, only male-centric action dramas could rake in big numbers.

Standing tall at the centre of the film's success is actor Tabu, who shared the screen with Kareena Kapoor and Kriti Sanon in director Rajesh Krishnan's film produced by Rhea Kapoor, Ekta Kapoor and Anil Kapoor. "The film had several elements that the audience enjoyed and while working on it, I believed it would do good numbers," says Tabu.

She should know. *Crew* is the latest in her series of hits, after *Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2* and *Drishyam 2*. She also played the central parts in *Kuttey, Bholaa* and the Netflix original film, *Khufiya*. At 52, the actor is quietly showing how a female actor can be age and generation agnostic, and call the shots.

Faith in normalcy

The last decade has seen Tabu reinventing herself. Post director Vishal Bhardwaj's acclaimed *Haider*, the more mainstream films such as *Drishyam*, *Andhadhun* and *De De Pyaar De*, among others, saw her frequently courting box office success.

Tabu remembers the conversations during lockdowns when the film industry wondered if the audience would frequent theatres again, after being habituated to digital platforms. "People were making assumptions and it annoyed me. One school of thought became so infectious that the entire film industry began to echo it. I used to wonder if I am the only one who does not agree with their notion."

She says she urged those who voiced such apprehensions to wait until normalcy returns. "When films began again at the box office, I laughed and told them *'maine kya bola tha?'* (what did I tell you?). Those who wanted to coerce you into working more in the digital space said theatres are a thing of the past. Now that films are succeeding, people say don't think about OTT."

Time for some fun

Crew was written by Nidhi Mehra and Mehul Suri and many of the zinger lines, including Tabu telling Kareena who is indulging in vanity, *'Bas kar Cleopatra, yeh foundation hai time machine nahi'* (Stop it Cleopatra, this is foundation, not a time machine) hit the mark.

Some of the lines, Tabu reveals, were improvised on set. "Nidhi and Mehul had worked on the writing for four years and were particular about what they wanted. In consultation with the director and the writers, I changed a few words that I felt would not land well and generate laughs. Comedies are always alive on set and things change according to actors since it is not an intensely dramatic script."

Tabu wanted the different facets of her character, Geeta Sethi, to come through. "She is fun but there is gravitas to her. She is a former beauty queen (of Karnal), has seen the vagaries of life and has inner strength; to the best of my abilities I tried to bring all that on screen. The relationship she shares with her husband is special and Kapil Sharma playing that part added so much to the bonding."

The character is also prone to anxiety, popping pills and wiping away sweat in crucial situations and all this adds to the comedy. The trick was to find the sweet spot that made Geeta appear innocent, vulnerable but daring enough to be part of a heist.

Tabu is no stranger to comedies. Think *Saajan Chale Sasural* or *Biwi No.1*. She does not believe that script reading sessions or workshops are a must to break the ice with co-stars and get the comic timing right. "Even if I have never worked with an actor earlier, my training is such that I go on set and do what is required. I have worked in nearly 100 movies (92 and counting). It is not like we had script reading sessions for all those films," and breaks into a laugh.

Staying relevant

Having been a part of cinema for nearly 40 years (she debuted as a child actor in the 1985 film *Hum Naujawan*), Tabu has the knack of keeping abreast with changes. "It is tough to point out what has worked. It is a combination of factors – the years of work and the relationship I share with the audience across generations. You are considered relevant only if you can connect with the immediate younger generation."

Has she thought about how she manages to do it? "It is not like I watch series and movies to know what currently works. Since childhood I have not been the kind to consume too much cinema. Nowadays information pours in through different sources and you can gauge what might work."

Ask her if Indian cinema is moving into a zone where actors in all age groups have more scope to dabble with interesting parts and she says, "Society has changed and so has the taste of the audience. Today new concepts are more palatable to the mainstream audience. Ultimately it all boils down to how an actor is presented in a story."

Stories of hope and release

First Drop Theatre presents *Crossing Over*, a theatrical anthology, inspired by the stories of cancer survivors and their caretakers

Twilight moments
A still from the play; (below) Radhika Jain.
SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

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Cancer brings devastation to one's physical, emotional and financial wellbeing. The disease not only drains the patient, but also the family and caretakers, due to the long drawn treatments that stretch for years, leaving behind disastrous side effects.

In Bengaluru, Karunashraya (Bangalore Hospice Trust) offers free palliative care to the terminally ill, attempting to make their lives as comfortable as possible. In 2023, Karunashraya launched *Crossing Over,* a book compiling of the stories of its patients. These stories come to life on stage through First Drop Theatre as Crossing Over, to be staged from April 13.

"First Drop Theatre has not been into mainstream theatre but something called a playback theatre," says Radhika Jain, founder and artistic director of the company. "It is an interactive, socio-improv format of theatre where the audience share feelings and moments from their lives, and the actors perform them on-the-spot using text, poetry, images, movement, music and more."

The best thing about playback theatre is that one does not need a stage, costumes or a huge stage set, says writer and director Bejoy Balagopal. "It can be practised in any open space. We have used short and long forms, as well as metaphors to bring the stories to life using this form of theatre."

First Drop Theatre explains Bejoy, focuses on theatre and health care, which led them to work extensively with Karunashraya. "We did a playback performance based on our interactions with the nurses and the caretakers there. Nurses, we realised, were deeply affected by all the patients they lost. Some of them said they had numbed themselves to be able to deal better with the suffering they witness daily."

Radhika did an extended eight-week workshop for the nurses in Karunashraya to help them be aware of their emotions and how to deal with them. The long years of interaction led Karunashraya to collaborate with First Drop Theatre when they launched the book.

It is an account of the experiences of the terminally-ill, nurses, doctors and caretakers, says Bejoy. "We were asked to stage these stories. *Crossing Over* is a proscenium play."

The play features three stories from the book, *Bonds That Bind* (a reflection on relationships), *Rainbow of Emotions* (different levels of acceptance that patients exhibit) and *Prem & Prem* (about world beyond the binary and how that holds new meanings for health care professionals).

After the staging, Bejoy says, there will be half an hour of playback theatre time to interact with the audience.

Crossing Over *will be staged on April 13 at Vyoma ArtSpace, JP Nagar, April 14 at Medai - The Stage, Koramangala and April 20 at Shoonya Center for Art and Somatic Practices, Lal Bagh Main Road. All shows are at 5.30 pm, tickets are on BookMyShow.*

A Burmese treat

Burma Burma has an ongoing Thingyan festival, which offers Burmese home-style, festive dishes and beverages. The fest, which started on April 11, will go on till May 19. Burma Burma has outlets in Indiranagar, Forum Rex Walk and Mall of Asia.
Call 9920240092 or 9920240093 for details and reservations.

A game that shows how every drop counts amidst Bengaluru's water crisis

Taking the current water crisis into consideration, Fields of View recently hosted a public session of Hanigalu, a gaming simulation built on Bengaluru's real water data

Preeti Zachariah
BENGALURU

Water has been a pressing issue in Bangalore for years," says Trina Talukdar, Chief Visioning Officer, Fields of View, a city-based organisation that builds games and simulations on public policy issues. While she agrees that this year is worse than ever before, she believes that there is a bit of collective amnesia when it comes to Bengaluru's water issues. "We pretend that this has never happened before, and everyone acts surprised," she says, talking about how it is a persistent problem.

Taking the current water crisis into consideration, Fields of View recently hosted a public session of Hanigalu, a gaming simulation built on Bangalore's real water data. "By playing this game with other people from around the country, you can understand in-depth about water security planning, its intricacies and trade-offs," says Trina of the game, which was developed back in 2019 in collaboration with Azim Premji University, as part of the Small Grants Programme of the Bengaluru Sustainability Forum.

In the summer of 2019, Bengaluru was assailed by yet another drinking water crisis - it was, as the Fields of View website states "just one reminder about the intersection of urban governance and management of a natural resource against the background of climate change."

It also points out that though constitutional provisions exist to involve citizens in the governance of a city, the utilisation of these spaces has remained stunted. "Similarly, methods and tools for citizen participation have remained largely underdeveloped," it adds. That is where experiential games, like Hanigalu, can help. They are a great way to fill in these gaps by helping citizens understand the water crisis from multiple perspectives, and be able to make better, more informed decisions both at an individual level and as a collective, believes Trina.

"We wanted to find a way to get to the centre of it all...to understand the complexity of the problem and come up with a solution, keeping multiple points of view in mind," she says.

About 'Hanigalu'

In 2018, Cape Town in South Africa almost faced Day Zero, when the South African legislative capital's taps nearly ran dry, leaving its residents, more than four million of them, in a dire water crisis. The catastrophe, however, was averted, thanks to a host of water-conservation initiatives. There are some striking parallels between Cape Town in 2018 and Bengaluru today, making the idea of a Day Zero here rather plausible. Hanigalu, which is set in the fictional city of Paanipura loosely modelled on Bengaluru, takes its players through the history of this city, once amply watered by lakes and even a non-perennial river, but now facing a severe water crisis, with the looming risk of a Day Zero.

It describes how Paanipura, with an altitude of 934 m above sea level, an enviably pleasant climate, a series of lakes that helped recharge aquifers and afforestation drives by its farsighted rulers, had ample water for many centuries. The recent past, however, is a different story. Hanigalu goes on to also highlight the effects of indiscriminate urbanisation, industrialisation and migration on the city and shows the kind of pressure the city's infrastructure and resources, including water, will be under if there is a further increase in the city's population.

Residents collecting free water from a tanker, in Bengaluru. PTI

Players are also taken through the current water situation in the city, dwelling on supply, coverage, the demand-supply gap, the relationship between socio-economic status and access to water, waste-water treatment strategies, and the economics of water supply and treatment, among other things. They are then asked to choose between various scenarios, develop strategies to deal with the scenario chosen and understand the repercussions of these choices on the overall water situation.

For instance, during the pandemic, when household water consumption increased due to citizens being at home more and increased hygiene needs, one of the strategies suggested was diverting industrial water to households as industries were closed, explains Trina. "Many citizens thought it was a great solution," she says.

Akhilesh, a Fields of View team member, facilitating Hanigalu for B.A. Economics students at R.V. college.

However, what happened in reality was more complicated, she points out. While choosing this option helped preserve groundwater, the water supply and sewerage board went bankrupt: industries usually pay more for water as household water is subsidised. "It enables people to see all points of view," she says. "We put our research out in the world through these serious games and simulations so that it can convert to real action on the ground," she says.

A training tool

When Hanigalu was first developed, the primary audience for the game was master's students. "We wanted primarily to involve people who would be involved in different aspects of water security planning, especially students doing their master's in sustainable development," says Yashwin Iddya, Chief Knowledge Officer, Fields of View. "We wanted them to understand the complexity of water and what kind of data goes into managing it," he says.

While students continue to be a key stakeholder group, over time, the Fields of View team realised that many other sorts of audiences could benefit from such a game. "We are now focused on taking this game and putting it in the hands of (as many) diverse stakeholders as possible," says Trina. She feels that solutions to our problems could come from different quarters, including policymakers, resident welfare associations and civil society organisations.

"Different people and groups of people are trying to solve this issue in silos," she says. Hanigula, she firmly believes, could help us understand the issue more holistically and push us to come up with solutions by taking into account the grievances of other stakeholders. "It is not just about finding a solution for our building but also how finding a solution for our building will affect this larger ecosystem around us."

Why games?

But, why play games to deal with our water situation? For starters, it allows a safe place for experimentation, Trina explains. "In real life, you cannot say, let's increase taxation or divert industrial water supply and see what happens," she states. A gaming simulation built on real-world data, however, allows someone to experiment, learn, and even fail. "You can choose an option, and if you don't like the results, you can come back and choose another option."

Other advantages offered by serious games, in general, include better engagement, more accessibility and higher retention of learning, she adds. "Human beings store information and data as stories," says Trina, who believes that it is the natural inclination of our species. "People will show up to play a game and tell stories."

To learn more about Hanigalu, log into fieldsofview.in

Flipkart opens grocery warehouse

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Flipkart, an e-commerce marketplace, has launched its new grocery fulfillment center in Hubballi, Karnataka, furthering its commitment to offering next-day grocery deliveries to consumers.

Based on local consumer insights, the new fulfillment center in Hubballi will offer a curated selection of over 6,000 products, including the State's popular favourites such as Nandini, Naga, and Vijay, to name a few alongside several branded grocery items to cater to the diverse palate of regional consumers, according to Flipkart.

The online grocery market in Hubballi was seeing rapid growth with demand surging by 15 percent month-on-month, it said. Additionally, given the unavailability of quick commerce in the region, there has been a steep increase in consumers' preferring value-based selection of groceries being delivered to their doorstep the next-day.

This rise in demand led to the launch of Flipkart's third grocery fulfillment center in the State, said a release.

The new fulfillment centre in Hubballi will offer a curated selection of over 6,000 products. REUTERS

Spread over 60,000 square feet, this new fulfillment center has the dispatch capacity of over 9,000 orders per day across Hubblli and its neighbouring regions, such as Ballari, Davanagere, Dharwad, Shivamogga, as well as those in South and North Goa, according to the company.

Rajneesh Kumar, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Flipkart Group, said, "The launch of our third grocery fulfillment center in Karnataka has significantly improved Flipkart's proximity to consumers in the state ensuring easy access to fresh groceries. It further bolsters our commitment to providing next-day deliveries of daily essentials to consumers at their doorstep."

IPL merchandise flying off the shelves as cricket fever spreads in the city

RCB and CSK jerseys are the most popular ones right now, say sellers

Tenzin Yangkey
BENGALURU

As IPL fever spreads across the city, jerseys are being sold rapidly in and around the Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru. K.K. Malaya, 62, who has been in the business for nearly 50 years, is one of them. According to him, "Almost a hundred people from each place-- Kolkata, Chennai, Mumbai and Delhi--have flocked to Bengaluru to sell jerseys for the new season of Tata IPL (Indian Premier League)", he says as he sits on the footpath, surrounded by a wide display of jersey from different IPL teams.

He says that he has been selling roughly 50 to 100 jerseys per day, which go at ₹200 per piece, earning around 20% of the sales profit as commission. Another seller, 21-year-old Mohamad Sabith, earns even less: only ₹600 per day, as he has to juggle work with his studies.

Booming business

Business, however, is booming, agree the sellers, as almost 50% of the spectators among the 32,000 people in the stadium purchase these jerseys as a way of showcasing their support for their respective teams. Besides these jerseys, other merchandise like caps are also available, and being rapidly purchased at a reasonable rate. So, what is the most popular team right now? RCB jerseys, despite the hate they received on social media after the original black-and-red colour was changed to red-and-blue, are going the fastest, thanks to the team being led by Virat Kohli. This is followed by CSK (Chennai Super Kings).

RCB fans during the IPL 2024 cricket match between KKR and RCB at M. Chinnaswamy stadium in Bengaluru. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Fans wearing Chennai Super Kings jersey at the M.A Chidambaram stadium, Chepauk, in Chennai.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 12, 1974

Opposition 'Drops' Charge Against Karnataka PWD Minister

Bangalore, April 11: The Public Works Minister, Mr. H.M. Channabasappa, stated in the Karnataka Assembly to-day that the details of the accounts relating to his building placed before the House spoke for themselves and rendered the allegation that cement, and steel meant for two Harijan hostels in Bangalore had been diverted to his house, baseless and motivated'. Mr. Channabasappa, who is undergoing medical treatment in the Bowring Hospital, came to the House from the hospital to make the statement stoutly refuting the charge, made in the House on March 20 by the Socialist member Mr. Konadur Lingappa.

Strict Law on Forest Wealth Smuggling

Bangalore, April 11: The Minister for Forests and Food, K.H. Patil announced in the Karnataka Assembly to-day that the Government proposed to amend the existing rules and regulations to prevent official delay in effectively curbing smuggling of forest wealth in the State. The Government also would make the punitive clauses on smuggling more severe, he said.

Replying to the debate on the financial demands of the Forest Department, Mr. Patil said that the Government also proposed to bring in amendments to the existing Forest Act by which the powers to release the forest land for purposes other than afforestation would vest with the legislature. One of the amendments proposed would make offences under the Forest Act cognisable.

Karnataka InFocus

THE HINDU

NUGGETS OF HISTORY

The genesis of AIISH in Mysuru

AIISH was founded in 1965 for human resource development, research, clinical services, and public education in the field of communication disorders. On the invitation of the Government of India, Dr. Martin F. Palmer, Director, Institute of Logopedics, Wichita, Kansas, USA, visited India in 1963 and recommended setting-up an Institute of Logopedics in Mysuru.

Initial years on a rental premises

On August 9, 1965, the All-India Institute of Logopedics started functioning at Rama Mandira (a rented building) with Dr. B.M. Rao as its first director. On July 25, 1966, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then President of India, laid the foundation stone of the institute building. On October 10, 1966, the institute got registered as autonomous under the Society Registration Act, 1860.

First of its kind in India

The M.Sc program in Speech and Hearing was reckoned to be the first of its kind in India that was introduced by the institute with affiliation to the University of Mysore 58 years ago. What started as a small institution in 1965 has today developed into one of the premier establishments of the government of India across South Asia in the field of communication disorders.

A recognition of expertise

Because of its expertise, AIISH has been acknowledged for its works, facilities and initiatives. It was recognised as a Centre of Excellence in the area of deafness by WHO; a Centre for Advanced Research by the UGC; a Science and Technology Institute by the DST; a Centre of Excellence by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare; and a college with Potential for Excellence

Shravana Sanjeevani, boon to many

The Karnataka government is working closely with the AIISH for the successful implementation of the cochlear implant scheme which has been renamed as 'Shravana Sanjeevani'. Minister for Health and Family Welfare Dinesh Gundu Rao had recently said at AIISH that the government has set its vision to make Karnataka a hearing impairment-free State.

Does your voice need a doctor? Check out this clinic in Mysuru

Located at the All India Institute of Speech and Hearing, the Clinic for Persons with Voice Disorders offers specialised screening and analysis, and treatment for individuals with voice problems. World Voice Day is on April 16

Shankar Bennur
MYSURU

The Mysuru-based All India Institute of Speech and Hearing (AIISH), a premier institute of the Government of India in the field of speech and hearing, has on its campus a unique facility that provides remedies for those suffering from voice disorders, especially professional voice users like singers and teachers.

As voice health is key for individuals who use it as an occupational means, the facility plays an important role in addressing voice issues with technological interventions, offering specialised assessment and treatment for individuals with voice problems. The facility is equipped with the state-of-the-art device for interventions to visualise structures of vocal folds using a video stroboscope.

AIISH's Clinic for Persons with Voice Disorders was founded to exclusively cater to voice problems. It has come as a blessing for many like singers, teachers for whom voice is life.

A large number of people visit AIISH in Mysuru to avail themselves clinical services. FILE PHOTO

Awareness on voice health

Over the years, the clinic has spread awareness on voice health, and precautions for proper care of voice to overcome complications. On the occasion of World Voice Day which is observed on April 16 every year, the role played by the AIISH gets recognised with a team of experts carrying out consultations, interventions and analysis to bring succour to those with voice problems. The theme of this year's voice day is "Resonate, Educate and Celebrate." It highlights the role played by voice health in our personal and professional lives.

Experts say professional voice users like teachers, singers and lawyers are prone to voice problems due to excessive use of voice. Thanks to the clinic, many teachers have recovered their voice quality after undergoing voice therapy. There have also been instances of voice problems coming back if precautions for voice health are not taken.

Who is at risk

Those who use their voice for profession on a day-to-day basis are at a risk of developing voice problems frequently. Singers, lawyers, cheerleaders, hawkers/vendors are among the professional voice users. Excessive talking, throat clearing, coughing, inhaling irritants, smoking or yelling result in injury to vocal folds. Dust allergy, improper food habits, respiratory problems, paralysis or paresis of vocal cords, cancerous growth etc., are the other causes of voice problems, according to AIISH experts.

They are usually advised to avoid speaking loudly for hours together and going to bed immediately after lunch or dinner besides evading throat clearing, getting exposed to dust or chemicals besides speaking in the presence of loud music and noise, screaming and shouting and so on.

Dr. K. Yeshoda, Associate Professor in Speech Sciences and Chairperson, the Clinic for Persons with Voice Disorders, AIISH says voice therapy is a process practiced by speech-language pathologists or speech-language therapists. It is a procedure adopted to bring back normal voice or to improve existing abnormal voice. Voice therapy begins after a patient's complaint of a voice problem is assessed and a diagnosis is made by qualified professionals. The majority of the voice problems do not improve only with medications and/surgeries, she added.

Dr. Yeshoda, who, on the occasion of voice day, had given a call for improving our voice to reflect our individual identity by consciously practising appropriate, efficient and hygienic methods of voice use. In a note, she says most voice problems occur due to unhealthy habits of excessive talking, and misuse of voice. Such habits are called vocal abuse behaviours/ habits. Common vocal abuse behaviours are shouting, screaming, talking continuously, lengthy phone conversations, talking for long hours, throat clearing, excessive crying, imitating sounds, imitation of others speaking styles.

What is voice therapy

Voice therapy is a systematic treatment procedure that uses exercises to modify the abnormal/maladaptive behaviors, behaviors due to excess use of voice and/ continuous use of voice for a prolonged period and/ compromised bodily processes (owing to surgical interventions) of the biological organs responsible to produce voice. These treatment procedures have to be practiced regularly and systematically by the patients with voice problems for change in existing voice problems, she explained.

Explains R. Rajasudhakar, Associate Professor, Department of Speech-Language Sciences and Member, Clinic for Persons with Voice Disorders, "Precautions are key for preserving voice health. Drinking plenty of water, taking adequate voice rest, speaking with normal or average loudness, drinking herbal tea, giving gap between two consecutive classes, giving minimum of one and half to two hours gap between meal/dinner time and bedtime are a few vocal hygiene tips that one can follow for the good voice health."

Otolaryngologists, speech-language pathologists and phono surgeons need to work together and educate the public including patients with voice problems about the recent advances in the field of voice care through lectures, free voice screening etc, the expert said in a note he shared to the media sometime ago. If the voice, from the occupational point of view, is not adequately satisfying or not able to meet someone's requirement in carrying out the daily job means, it is said to be a voice problem, he explains. If a singer complains of not being able to sing in a high note or 'swaras', then it is a voice problem, he informs.

A face-shaped museum on AIISH campus in Mysuru

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

A museum in the shape of a human face is coming up at the AIISH campus in Mysuru. Reckoned to be one of a kind, the museum aims to spread awareness of vocal and auditory functions; pathological/ dysfunctional conditions, and preventive measures. The structure of the museum is ready and other works are underway.

Once completed, it will emerge as a destination for study tours and also a tourist attraction. Its launch appears to have been delayed.

According to the institute, the basement of the museum representing the neck of a human being will have three floors each with a mezzanine. The floor, walls, and ceiling will have interactive display systems. The museum has been planned to give a feeling to visitors as if they are entering through the brain and coming out of the lungs, larynx and oral tract, experiencing how speech is produced, and language is encoded and decoded, the institute had stated when the project was launched a few years ago.

Also, the museum plans to give visitors the feeling of entering the ear system and getting into various parts of the human ear to reach the brain, in order to learn how one listens and understands.

Interestingly, as per the project plan, the floor of the museum will be fitted with sensors which will lead to the central nervous system through various cranial nerves. When one touches the sensor of a particular nerve end, the sensor will glow showing the path leading to the end of the nerve. The ceiling will have an audio-visual display showing the functions of the brain, the institute had said in its press release.

The museum in the shape of a human face that is coming up on the campus of AIISH. M.A. SRIRAM

Hearing loss: Newborn screening gets expanded

Under the newborn hearing screening programme, over 60,000 infants are screened every year using state-of-art technology

The Hindu Bureau
MYSURU

As late identification of hearing problems among the newborns can result in permanent hearing loss, newborn screening has been given a priority. Any delay in the identification causes a hurdle in the successful management of children with hearing loss.

AIISH says global standards prescribe that hearing loss should be confirmed by two months of age and treated by three months of age but the age of identification in India is late (beyond 3 years).

Therefore, AIISH has joined hands with the Department of Health and Family Welfare to educate the medical teams working under Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) and District Early Intervention Centre (DEIC) on early screening of communication disorders in children. With this, newborn screening has been expanded with the number of births being on the rise. Children born with hearing loss will not develop speech since they don't hear it and therefore early interventions are a must, experts at AIISH said.

AIISH has developed a dedicated newborn screening system (NBS) through which infants are screened for speech, language and hearing disorders within a few days of their birth at bedside in over 20 hospitals in Mysuru city and 30 outreach service centers. Each month, more than 6,000 newborns are screened through the programme and children at risk for speech, language and hearing disorders are identified well within one month of their birth.

About 3 in 1,000 newborns are known to have permanent hearing loss. These infants typically won't have any overt signs due to which the hearing loss goes undetected unless a hearing screening test is conducted. It is important to know that hearing loss can be accurately identified right at birth through audiological tests, the institute had said in a press release during the expansion of NBS.

AIISH has collaborated with District Early Intervention Center (DEIC), Mysuru with the aim of conducting newborn screening in the taluk hospitals on a quarterly basis. The AIISH's team of experts would visit the taluk hospitals on that day to conduct newborn screening and identify at-risk infants. "By these efforts, more infants and geographical regions would be benefitting from the AIISH's NBS program. Those identified through this screening program will be treated either in DEIC or AIISH as per the convenience of the patients," according to AIISH.

Under the newborn hearing screening programme, over 60,000 infants are screened every year using the state-of-art technology within seven days of their birth at the respective hospitals. The newborns who did not pass the screening test were evaluated in detail within two months of their birth to confirm the presence of hearing loss.

Three-pronged race

As the BRS slips, the Congress stays ahead in Telangana

With a behemoth like the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) on the wane on the one hand and frantic crossovers across party lines on the other, Telangana could well be among the most heavily contested States in South India in the general election. While the Congress won an impressive 39% votes in the Assembly election in November 2023, former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao's BRS, which is now the principal Opposition party after a decade in power, was only two percentage points short in terms of vote share. The Congress bettered its vote share by 14 percentage points from the 2018 Assembly elections, while the BRS declined by a similar margin from a dominant 47%. But as *The Hindu* had reported then, the swing against the BRS appears to have gone both in favour of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Congress: in Adivasi dominated areas for the BJP and Muslim dominated regions for the Congress.

Moreover, in the nearly four months of Congress Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy's rule, there has been a marked change in the public's perception of the government and governance. For one, Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, the Deputy Chief Minister and a Dalit, now occupies the official residence of the Chief Minister built by K. Chandrashekar Rao in 2016. The building has also been renamed Jyothirao Phule Praja Bhavan to counter the perception of inaccessibility and social exclusion. Sure, KCR's first deputy and Health Minister, T. Rajaiah, who was sacked within a year of taking oath, was also a Dalit. But so too was his replacement and former Education Minister, Kadiyam Srihari. While most welfare measures promised by the Congress, such as 200 units of free electricity, are yet to be implemented fully due to the Model Code of Conduct in place for the seven-phased Lok Sabha elections, the public appears to be in no hurry yet to write off the Congress. And with recent high profile defections from the BRS to the Congress, such as Mr. Srihari and Rajya Sabha Member K. Keshava Rao, who is widely viewed to be KCR's trusted lieutenant, the likelihood of the BRS matching its performance in the 2019 general election – nine seats and a 42% vote share – appears bleak. An important indicator not to be missed is the doubling of the BJP's vote share from 7% to 14% between the 2018 and 2023 Assembly elections. This points to a three-pronged race emerging in Telangana. Assaduddin Owaisi's party, the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen, is still a major player, though without any formal alliance. It remains to be seen how its supporters vote in the seats that it is not contesting.

Finality and justice

DMRC dispute flags need for arbitrators to be more mindful of fact and law

The Supreme Court of India has used its extraordinary powers to set aside its own judgment of 2021 and relieve the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) of an exorbitant burden of ₹7,687 crore in a dispute with a former concessionare. The verdict vindicates the existence of the Court's curative jurisdiction on the one hand, and flags, on the other, a possible conflict between finality in litigation and the need for substantive justice. In this case, an arbitral tribunal had ruled in 2017 in favour of Delhi Airport Metro Express Private Ltd. (DAMEPL), which got the contract to construct, maintain and operate the line from New Delhi railway station to Delhi airport. DAMEPL had invoked the termination clause in its agreement in October 2012, citing the DMRC's alleged failure to cure some defects. While the DMRC invoked the arbitration clause, DAMEPL halted operations in June 2013 and handed over the line to the DMRC. Meanwhile, based on a joint application, the Commissioner of Metro Rail Safety (CMRS) issued a certificate of safety that helped revive the metro's operations. On appeal, a single judge of the Delhi High Court upheld the arbitration award against DMRC, but a Division Bench set it aside, holding that the award suffered from perversity and patent illegality. In 2021, a two-judge Bench of the Supreme Court restored the award, reversing the High Court Bench's findings in favour of the DMRC. A review petition was also rejected.

A curative petition is an extraordinary remedy, as it is filed after the apex Court refuses to review its judgment. There are only two main grounds for entertaining such a petition: to prevent abuse of process and to prevent gross miscarriage of justice, although it is not possible to enumerate all the circumstances that warrant it. It is founded on the principle that the court's concern for justice is no less important than the principle of finality. Under India's arbitration law, an award can be set aside only on limited grounds. It is normally inexpedient for arbitration issues to have many levels of litigation – in this case there was a statutory appeal to the High Court, and appeals to a Bench, the apex Court, a review petition and a curative petition. In the ultimate analysis, the DMRC case appears to have been rightly decided as the earlier two-judge Bench was ruled to have erred in setting aside the Delhi High Court Bench's view that the CMRS certificate was a vital piece of evidence. The outcome only underscores the importance of arbitrators and judges sitting on appeal over awards getting both fact and law right, lest commercial litigants be discouraged from arbitration due to the constant stretching of the idea of finality. Not all disputants can go up to the level of a curative petition.

In poll season, the perils of scorching bilateral ties

Suhasini Haidar

"All geopolitics is local" is the unwritten rule of policymaking in the 21st century era of populism. As a result, most leaders around the world make foreign policies that ensure that there is no adverse impact on domestic politics, and if possible, even gain them some votes. However, rarely do general elections get conflated with foreign policy issues as the upcoming elections in India seem to have become.

Take, for example, the recent statements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar calling into question the 1974 India-Sri Lanka agreement. Not only did they both castigate former Prime Ministers and their party for the decision to recognise Katchatheevu island as part of Sri Lankan territory, but the External Affairs Minister also went on to say that a "solution" must be found for the continuing "situation" Tamil Nadu fishermen find themselves in as a result of the agreement. The merits and demerits of the 1974 agreement and 1976 exchange of letters, replete with the "loss" of Katchatheevu and the "gain" of the oil rich Wadge Bank, have since been thrashed out by both sides of the political spectrum. Commentators have since pointed to government statements, Parliament and Right to Information (RTI) replies and depositions in court (on the Katchatheevu issue and fishermen's rights) that are at variance with Mr. Jaishankar's criticism of the 1974 agreement.

While the aim of the statements is to have an impact during the first phase of India's general election where Tamil Nadu will vote next week, the long-term impact that the statements will have on bilateral ties with Sri Lanka, which is headed for both presidential and parliamentary elections later, seem to have been ignored. Ties with Sri Lanka have been seeing new strength over the past few years after the Modi government extended crucial support of an estimated $4 billion to help Colombo handle the economic crisis in the country. To have strains over a campaign issue would dampen some of the Wickremesinghe government's goodwill.

Credibility could take a hit

Other than the bilateral strain, the government's hints about reopening the 50-year-old agreement raise other international questions. Could other agreements, signed on the basis of the 1974 settlement, also be revised? Could negotiations that India is undertaking right now, or has already agreed to, such as the maritime boundary settlement with Bangladesh that was accepted by New Delhi in 2014 after a United Nations tribunal verdict, or as an Indian Opposition leader asked, the land boundary agreement (India-Bangladesh) to exchange enclaves, be revised by another government in the future? The recognition of maritime agreements by international bodies such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) makes any revisions difficult. It will also put in doubt India's credibility as an interlocutor if New Delhi chooses to pursue this line after the general election. New Delhi has already seen the challenges to doing this with the World Bank-guaranteed 1960 Indus Waters Treaty. It has been five years since the Modi government threatened to revoke the treaty with Pakistan, and more than a year after New Delhi wrote to Islamabad calling for a renegotiation, but the matter has not yet moved.

> Election campaign rallies and media conferences are not the places to be making vociferous statements on sensitive foreign policy issues

On the CAA, transnational involvement

Days before the announcement of the general election, the government's decision to notify rules for the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, or CAA, that it had refrained from doing since the law was passed in 2019, is another example of domestic moves that could put a dampener on otherwise strong ties with a neighbour. Although the government has consistently held that the CAA is purely a domestic law, its foreign policy implications are inescapable. It accuses India's neighbours, Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, of persecuting minorities. The CAA's exclusionary nature, accepting only people of six faiths other than Muslims from the three countries, has been seen as discriminatory by countries in the neighbourhood. While ties with Afghanistan under the Taliban, and Pakistan appear to be of little consequence to New Delhi today, the accusation against a friendly government in Bangladesh is significant.

The fear over the long term, that as a result of the subsequent implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), hundreds of thousands of those believed to have come from Bangladesh could be deemed stateless citizens also has the potential to strain ties with Dhaka. There were protests against the CAA in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, but the most vociferous were in Bangladesh – during Mr. Modi's visit to Dhaka in 2021, 12 people were killed in police action against protesting mobs. While there has been no official comment from the Sheikh Hasina government in Bangladesh on the recent decision on the CAA by New Delhi, India's diplomats in Dhaka will have their work cut out for them if and when the policies are fully implemented.

Apart from areas where the government itself has brought foreign policy into contention at a time of the general election, there are those issues that others in the political arena are raising. In recent weeks, the Opposition has been issuing statements at regular intervals questioning the Modi government about India's standoff with China at the Line of Actual Control, and the fact that the China's People's Liberation Army has not yet vacated land that it took control of in April 2020.

The issue of alleged transnational killings by Indian agencies is another thorn in the government's side, and is being raised internationally just as the general election gets underway. The trial of an Indian national in the United States for an alleged assassination plot to kill a Sikh political activist is expected to begin this summer. The Trudeau government in Canada is expected to do something similar as Canada alleges that 'agents of India assassinated a Sikh community leader in British Columbia'.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has also sought to align its claims that Indian agents killed two Pakistani nationals, with the cases in the U.S. and Canada, and has endorsed a British media report that says Indian intelligence is possibly behind the killing of 20 other Sikh and Islamist separatist operatives in Pakistan. Although it is Pakistan which should be on the back foot explaining the presence of those men on its soil, New Delhi's discomfiture is underlined by the three completely different responses it has presented to Canada, Pakistan, and the U.S.

An assertion by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh that it is government policy to "kill terrorists that go into Pakistan" is at odds with India's rubbishing of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's allegations of Indian involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, India's strong retaliatory measures against Canadian diplomats in India, and New Delhi's tacit acceptance of the validity of U.S. government claims of Indian involvement in a botched assassination attempt on Gurpatwant Singh Pannun. Unlike its stand with Canada and Pakistan, New Delhi even agreed to examine U.S. evidence in the Pannun case and set up a "high-level" inquiry panel, for what Mr. Jaishankar called an investigation that is in "India's national security interests".

Discretion the key

All of these issues can only be resolved discreetly, in closed bilateral negotiations, and not in the full glare of election campaign rallies and press conferences. The government must recognise that all statements it makes catch the attention of immediate neighbours, especially when it comes to territorial and sovereignty issues.

It came as a surprise to New Delhi that the Nepal government would take umbrage to the Indian gazette map, that was published in 2019, of a reorganised Jammu-Kashmir or to a mural in India's new Parliament building depicting "Akhand Bharat" – as no doubt, would any pushback from Colombo, Dhaka or Kathmandu on cartographic disputes raised during the campaign season. While the election season is relatively short, the consequences of sacrificing bilateral ties at the altar of domestic politics can, however, linger.

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A battle to save Ladakh, and all of humanity

Janaki Murali

is a journalist and author

When Ramon Magsaysay award winner (2018) and climate activist Sonam Wangchuk addressed a 30,000-strong crowd at Leh, Ladakh on March 6, 2024 to announce his 21-day climate fast, he was not just speaking to the people of Ladakh but also making an appeal to the world.

Tucked away between India's neighbours, Pakistan and China, at a height of 11,500 feet, Ladakh comprises 97% indigenous tribes, many of whom lead simple pastoral lives and depend on farming and animal rearing for a livelihood. Apart from border disputes, the Himalayan region also faces the damaging effects of climate change through floods, drought, landslides, greenhouse gases, and other pollutants.

There are about 15,000 glaciers in the Himalayan region, often referred to as the Third Pole. In spring and summer, these glaciers form an important part of the hydrological process by releasing meltwater to the Indus, the Ganga, and the Brahmaputra. The Himalayan glaciers, like those in the rest of the world, are at risk of melting due to global warming and climate change. This will affect both residents of the mountain region and those living downstream.

Infrastructure boom

In 2008, the Centre launched eight Missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC). One of these was under the Ministry of Science and Technology, i.e., the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE). As the Department of Science and Technology (DST) website states, the "main objective of NMSHE is to develop a capacity to scientifically assess the vulnerability of the Himalayan region to climate change and continuously assess the health status of the Himalayan ecosystem".

So, why has NMSHE forgotten its role of protecting the Himalayan region?

Almost as soon as Ladakh became a Union Territory, several mega infrastructure projects were launched at rapid pace. These included the construction of bridges, widening of roads, tunnels, railway lines, mega solar projects, a state-of-the-art airport terminal and wayside amenities to boost tourism. Among these were the 14.15 kilometre Zojila tunnel, the 230 km Kargil-Zanskar National Highway project, and a 10 gigawatt solar energy project covering 20,000 acres in the Changthang region. The Ladakh (UT) Industrial Land Allotment Policy of 2023 aims "to make UT Ladakh one of the preferred destinations for investment".

> Sonam Wangchuk's climate fast has highlighted the larger issue of the fragility of the Himalayan ecosystem

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has been spearheading many of these projects along with the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Ltd. (NHIDCL). In its annual report of 2021-22, the NHIDCL states as its vision the following: "To fast-pace the construction of National Highways and other Infrastructure in the North Eastern Region, near border and strategic areas like Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh and also in the state of Uttarakhand and UT of Andaman & Nicobar islands". Incidentally, all these areas are vulnerable to climate change-related disasters.

A region that has seen disasters

What is puzzling is why the various government bodies, sanctioning and executing the projects at such a feverish pace, are not paying heed to the warnings from past disasters in the mountains and learning from them.

Since 2010, there have been several disasters in the Himalayan region, with a loss of lives and livelihoods. In 2013, a cloudburst in the upper reaches of the Himalayas led to flash floods at Kedarnath, claiming 6,000 lives and sweeping away several settlements. In January 2023, disaster struck Joshimath, when water gushed down a lower slope of the mountain, submerging parts of the town. In November 2023, the rescue of 41 trapped workers in the collapsed Silkyara tunnel project in the Himalayas garnered international attention.

Uttarakhand, where all these tragedies occurred, too has seen a slew of infrastructure projects from its formation in 2000. This has continued despite dire warnings from geologists and ecologists. A Supreme Court of India constituted expert committee even suggested that authorities limit the number of pilgrims visiting the Char Dam Himalayan shrines, at Kedarnath, Badrinath, Yamunotri, and Gangotri to carrying capacity. Carrying capacity is the maximum number of people that an ecosystem can support, without eroding it. But, instead, pilgrim numbers have only swelled every year. Some expert committees have even suggested that no hydroelectric projects are set up in the para-glacial zone.

When tragedy strikes, the human cost of environmental destruction is sadly borne by poor migrant workers in ongoing projects and by residents, tourists and pilgrims. Government bodies sanctioning the projects or the developers executing them escape the wrath of the mountains.

Scant review

What has been frustrating climate change activists is their recommendations gathering dust despite approaching the courts and the formation of expert committees. Hardly any due diligence which includes risk assessment, safety measures and geological and seismic analysis, goes into any of the multi-crore mega projects in the mountains.

In the name of development, we cannot afford to upset the fragile balance in the Himalayan ecosystem and its biodiversity. The onus is on all of us to ensure that the Himalayas and the people living under its shadow are protected.

For, Wangchuk's battle is not just about Ladakh and its people. It is a battle for all of humanity and its future generations.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Survey pre-poll findings

The Hindu-CSDS-Lokniti Pre-poll Survey 2024 findings, that "jobs, inflation" are the key issues in the Lok Sabha elections (Page 1, Opinion page, Inside pages, April 11) are hardly surprising. The common man is reeling under the burden of price rise and unemployment. Mounting income inequality has also emerged as another major worry. However, what is surprising is that the Bharatiya Janata Party appears to be the least concerned about such issues and has been talking only in terms of '400 seats' and 'an action programme for the first 100 days in office'. That the BJP is able to get away by distracting the public from crucial livelihood issues and instead focus on raking up divisive issues is a sad reflection of the captive state of the mainstream media. The right questions are not being asked. The Opposition parties have also failed to pin down the BJP on vital livelihood issues affecting the common man. The BJP has been allowed to get away with the illusory image of being a crusader against corruption when it has been the major beneficiary of funds funnelled through the electoral bonds scheme.

Manohar Alembath,
Kannur, Kerala

The survey seems to have thrown up somewhat confusing results. While the primary concerns of a majority of those surveyed are unemployment and inflation, how is it that 48% have felt that their quality of life was 'much' or 'somewhat better'? It is also revealing that 55% have felt that corruption 'has increased'. If the opinions on unemployment, price rise and corruption expressed by the survey's respondents reflect the opinions of the broader sections of people, there may be a lot of surprises in store for our political parties. It appears that a majority of the weaker sections, irrespective of religion, caste, or gender, have not benefited from the 'robust' GDP growth witnessed by the nation.

Kosaraju Chandramouli,
Hyderabad

Despite the economy, how is the BJP sitting pretty?

The strengthening of Hindu identity through the construction and consecration of the Ram Mandir, the leadership factor, and the ambivalence of many voters on two issues — the Uniform Civil Code and the dilution of Article 370 — may work to the advantage of the BJP and help it weather the dissatisfaction about the economy

Suhas Palshikar, Sanjay Kumar & Sandeep Shastri

Reports based on the pre-poll survey of the Lokniti-Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), published in these pages on April 11, focused on the factors that had the potential to work in favour of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha elections. They indicated the possible chinks in the BJP's armour. Popular disapproval of the economic situation should be cause for worry for the BJP. However, the tenor of its rhetoric indicates that the BJP is confident of retaining its electoral ascendance. What makes the party feel so confident?

Perceptions and slogans

In the reports today, we focus on what appears to be working in favour of the ruling alliance in general and the BJP in particular. Drawing from the Lokniti-CSDS pre-poll survey, several indicators have the capacity to tilt the balance in favour of the ruling party. The perception of an improved image of India both within the country and abroad, the noticeable acceptance of key strategies, and a visible ambivalence regarding certain issues have the possibility of helping the BJP. But above all, the strengthening of Hindu identity and the BJP's clear identification with the Ram Mandir issue could help the party weather the dissatisfaction caused by the economy. In the next part of this series, we will also focus on the leadership factor, the glue holding all the positive factors together for the BJP.

The question of India's global image is something that the BJP can take advantage of. About 8% of the respondents said that the one thing they liked about the Narendra Modi government was its work on this front, i.e, of creating an international image.

A related strong point, though relevant to a somewhat narrow social section, is the successful organisation of the G20 Summit. While many respondents had not heard of the G20 Summit held in New Delhi, those in the cities and with high exposure to the media were aware of the event. Among those who were aware of the event, close to seven of every 10 were positive about its impact. They felt that it was reflective of India's growing power. They also saw it as a foreign policy achievement that would help foster trade and boost the economy. Though this endorsement may appear thin, it was upheld by the upper sections of society and can help the BJP build the perception that things are going in the right direction.

The BJP's key slogan for the 2014 Lok Sabha elections was 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas'. After the party's victory in 2019, the Prime Minister added 'Sabka Vishwas' to this slogan. In the pre-poll survey, this aspiration resonated with over three-fourth of the respondents. An overwhelming majority of respondents appeared to support the idea that India must remain a country where people following different religions can live and practice their faith freely. Those with greater access to education appeared to endorse this statement more strongly.

An evocative issue: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat offer prayers before the idol of Ram Lalla during the consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, 2024. PTI

Ambivalence on issues

A possible step in the direction of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC), and the dilution of Article 370, are the two planks that might bring satisfaction to the BJP's more traditional voters. Moreover, the ambivalence of many voters on these two issues may work to the advantage of the BJP.

On the UCC, more than half the respondents had not heard of it or preferred not to express an opinion on it. While more than one-fourth said that it will empower women, less than two of every 10 said that it may interfere with religious traditions.

On the dilution of Article 370, four of every 10 respondents had either not heard of it or did not take a stand. While more than one-third said that it was a good step, one-sixth felt that it was good step but not done in the right way.

Will the ambivalence on these issues help the BJP or will the reluctance of some of the respondents to articulate their position throw up a surprise?

It is not clear whether the Opposition will be able to exploit these ambivalences in its favour. On the caste census too, more than half the respondents had not heard of it or did not express an opinion on it. One-fourth said that the Congress and its allies were serious about the caste census while one-third said that it was a political tool. Thus, on potentially controversial and complex issues, the absence of a clear alternative that resonates with the voters could work in favour of the BJP.

Hindu identity

Above all, the BJP has an opportunity in shifting the focus of the campaign. A significant share of the respondents mentioned the Ram Mandir as the most liked work of the Modi government. So, the construction and consecration of the temple has the potential of turning many voters in favour of the BJP.

The Ram Mandir has been a focus of a lot of debate as a key component of the BJP's electoral strategy. In the pre-poll survey, close to half the respondents felt that it will help consolidate Hindu identity. The support for this view was much higher among Hindu respondents. Among the Hindus, there was a clear class and caste divide in the intensity of response. The greater assertion of consolidation was visible among the economically well-off respondents and the upper castes. While one-fourth of the minorities also held the view that the temple will help consolidate Hindu identity, a majority of the Muslim respondents expressed no opinion on this.

Given the assertion that the Ram Mandir has led to greater consolidation of Hindu identity, it will surely be an important plank of the BJP's electoral strategy this time around. A caveat is in order here: public opinion is still more favourably inclined towards an inclusive idea of India. How far politics and campaigns can trump this innate quality of society remains to be seen.

> Public opinion is still more favourably inclined towards an inclusive idea of India

Troubles for the BJP

While the temple issue may enable the BJP to neutralise adverse sentiments on economic issues, some other factors may add to the negative sentiments against the incumbents. Trust in the Election Commission of India (ECI) has dramatically declined compared to five years ago. In the 2019 Lokniti-CSDS survey, more than half the respondents reposed great trust in the ECI; this has declined to less than three of every 10. The share of those who have little trust or no trust in the ECI has doubled in the last five years. It will be interesting to see whether this declining trust will impact support for the BJP.

On the actions of government agencies such as the Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation, the response seems to see a three-fold equal divide among those who said tat these agencies were being used for political vendetta, those who said that they were working within the bounds of law, and those who had no opinion on the subject. What could work to the BJPs advantage is that close to half its supporters said that these agencies were working within the law, allowing the party to retain its voter base.

In contrast, the issues of party switching, non-ideological alliances, and nepotism may trouble the BJP marginally – less in terms of image and more in terms of the support of the core base. Close to half the respondents felt that those switching over were protecting themselves from enforcement agencies. More than half the BJP's supporters felt that the party should not accept tainted leaders from other parties. Regarding alliances, BJP supporters were more likely to take the stand that everything is fair in politics and ideological purity is not a factor. There was more or less equal support of the view that the BJP is less nepotistic compared to the Congress and that the BJP is as nepotistic as the Congress. One-third of BJP supporters said that the BJP was less nepotistic than the Congress. This suggests that the respondents were more likely to look at this issue from the lens of their party affiliation.

This is the basket of factors that the BJP may have to deal with. The party is likely to rely on the Ram Mandir issue, undoubtedly the most dominant of these factors, to obviate other factors. Moreover, the negative sentiments flowing from some of the above factors could be trumped by the leadership factor.

Suhas Palshikar taught political science and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics; Sandeep Shastri is Director-Academics, NITTE Education Trust, and National Coordinator of the Lokniti Network; and Sanjay Kumar is Professor and Co-director Lokniti-CSDS

'Construction of the Ram Mandir will help the BJP consolidate Hindu identity'

Suhas Palshikar

The Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is probably the most evocative issue that has shaped politics for over three decades now. If in the 1990s, the Ram Janmabhoomi agitation mobilised Hindu public opinion across the country, mainly in the north and the west, and propelled the BJP to the centre stage of politics, the construction of the temple and its consecration in January this year have helped the party silently consolidate Hindu identity. Whether this issue will be brought into focus during the campaign is not important. If it is, the BJP may make further gains, but even if it is not, the BJP has already established itself as a party that stands for Hindu pride.

Reference points

We conducted this pre-poll survey more than two months after the consecration of the temple. Yet, the consecration of the temple was etched in the minds of the respondents as a major event. While the consecration was widely welcomed, doubts were expressed over its effect on the non-Hindu minorities and also over the nearly full-fledged state sponsorship of the event at Ayodhya. As the election campaign unfolds, the temple has already become a subterranean issue that voters will carry to the polling station. And undeniably, the issue is likely to work in the BJP's favour.

In the survey, when asked to name the 'most liked action' of this government, over 22% of the respondents mentioned the construction of the Ram Mandir. Nearly half the respondents said that the construction of the temple will help in consolidating Hindu identity (Table 1). This assessment was upheld more by Hindus than non-Hindus (Table 2). This assessment was prevalent more among men than women (49% men as opposed to 46% women believed that it will consolidate Hindu identity). The rich and the Hindu upper castes, followed by the middle classes and Hindu Other Backward Classes were more likely to believe that the Ram Mandir will consolidate Hindu identity (Table 3). This assessment was upheld more by rural respondents (50%) compared to urban respondents and the youth (52%). Also, the view that the temple will consolidate Hindu identity was held by more respondents in the country's north and west compared to the east and the south (Table 4).

Religious divide

It is quite clear that the temple issue also has the potential to lead to a religious divide. Overall, over one in every four respondents agreed with the view that this will be the case. This view was more prominent among non-Hindus than among Hindus. However, two points need to be noted here: one, even among Hindus, more than two among every five believed that the temple issue would increase differences among the two communities; and two, nearly one-fifth of the respondents did not have any opinion on this matter (Table 5).

If the BJP builds on these sentiments among the Hindus, it could garner greater support both in the regions where such sentiment is strong and in the regions where the party intends to make fresh inroads. In the coming days, it will be interesting to watch how the BJP uses this pre-existing social atmosphere to its advantage and also whether the Opposition has any politically viable response to that.

Suhas Palshikar taught political science and is chief editor of Studies in Indian Politics

Table 1: There is a belief that Ram Mandir will consolidate Hindu identity

(%)

The construction of Ram Mandir will	
Help in consolidating Hindu identity	48
Not impact Hindus much	25
No opinion	24

Note: Rest were not aware of Ram Mandir.

Question: Some people say that construction of the Ram Mandir will consolidate Hindu identity while others say Hindus are not really impacted by this. What is your opinion?

Table 3: Rich & upper castes were more likely to believe that the Mandir will consolidate Hindu identity

(%)

	Help in consolidating Hindu identity
Overall	48
Class	
Poor	43
Lower	47
Middle	49
Upper	58
Caste group	
Hindu upper caste	59
Hindu OBC	55
Hindu SCs	46
Hindu STs	47

Table 5: Will the Ram Mandir increase communal differences?

	The construction of Ram Mandir will			
	Increase harmony between Hindus and Muslims	Increase differences among the two communities	Make no difference	No Opinion
Overall	27	24	26	20
Hindu	31	22	27	18
Muslim	13	32	24	26
Other minorities	14	29	24	23

Note: Rest were not aware of the Ram Mandir.

Question asked: People have different views about the construction of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. Some people say it will foster harmony between Hindus and Muslims. Others say that it may increase differences between the communities. What is your opinion?

Table 2: Religious divide on Mandir issue

(%)

	The construction of Ram Mandir will		
	Help in consolidating Hindu identity	Not impact Hindus much	No opinion
Hindu	54	25	18
Muslim	24	21	50
Other minorities	22	36	30

Note: Rest were not aware of the Ram Mandir

Table 4: The Ram Mandir resonates a little less in the south and east

(%)

	The construction of Ram Mandir will		
	Help in consolidating Hindu identity	Not impact Hindus much	Don't know
North and West	51	24	23
South	43	28	23
East and Northeast	45	25	26

Note: Rest were not aware of the Ram Mandir

Remarkable support for religious pluralism

Table 1: Religious tolerance in India

(%)

India belongs to citizens of all religions equally, not just Hindus	79
India belongs only to Hindus	11
No opinion	10

Question asked: I'm reading out two statements. Please tell me which one you agree with the most?

Table 2: Hindu dominance versus religious equality in India

(%)

	India belongs to citizens of all religions equally, not just Hindus (%)
Overall	79
Religion	
Hindu	77
Muslims	87
Other minorities	81
Age	
18 -25 years	81
56 years and above	73
Educational Level	
No Schooling	72
College and above	83
Residence	
Village	76
Town	85
City	84

Sanjeer Alam & Nirmanyu Chauhan

India has been a multi-religious society for centuries. Different religions have coexisted and created for themselves cultural niches in the social space. Religious pluralism has survived historical accidents and political maelstroms. But some sociopolitical events and a growing chorus to turn the country into a 'Hindu Rashtra' have created doubts. Is the long-cherished ideal of religious tolerance still close to people's hearts? Is India's secular social fabric under grave threat? The the pre-poll survey helps clear these doubts.

The findings reveal that an overwhelming majority of respondents (79%) appeared to support the idea that India belongs to all religions equally and not just Hindus; that it must remain a country where people following different religions can live and practice their faith freely. This remarkable support for religious pluralism shows that religious tolerance continues to be a defining element of the social fabric.

People in urban settings appeared to be more supportive of religious pluralism than those in the countryside

It is natural for religious minorities to lay emphasis on religious pluralism. But the view that India belongs to followers of all religions is also held by members of the majority religion. Nearly eight in every 10 Hindus said that they have faith in religious pluralism. Only 11% of Hindus said that they think that India is nation of Hindus.

What is more reassuring is that more more young people (81%) than old (73%) were inclined to put premium on religious pluralism. Although the support for religious tolerance is high across the social spectrum, educational qualifications makes a difference. Compared with 72% of those who were unschooled, 83% of highly educated people said that they were in favour of equal status of all religions.

While communal tensions/conflicts are typically seen as an urban phenomenon, the data show a different pattern. As opposed to a commonly held belief, people living in urban settings appeared to be more supportive of religious pluralism and tolerance than those residing in the countryside.

In sum, a high degree of support for religious pluralism and equality at the societal level points to a couple of things. First, contrary to emerging perceptions, the idea of religious coexistence and tolerance holds its ground firmly. Second, a sharp religious divide in the political realm may not necessarily reflect the situation in the wider society. One, therefore, needs to see how religion features in the electoral context and in everyday life separately.

Sanjeer Alam is Associate Professor at CSDS and Nirmanyu Chauhan is Researcher at Lokniti-CSDS

Nepotism, defections, alliances: themes of the election season

Equal proportions of voters feel that the BJP is less nepotistic than the Congress and that it is equally nepotistic; a little less than half of the voters, as per the survey, believe the BJP should refrain from accepting leaders with a tarnished image

Vibha Attri
Devesh Kumar

Nepotism remains a recurring theme, with the BJP consistently critiquing the Congress for its dynastic politics and favouritism. However, the BJP has consistently welcomed politicians from other parties irrespective of their 'dynastic' background. Then there are leaders in the BJP itself who have strong family backgrounds in politics. How do voters perceive this?

According to the survey, voters are evenly split in their opinions on the BJP being nepotistic. While 25% of voters feel that the BJP is less nepotistic than the Congress, 24% feel that it is equally nepotistic. Only a small minority believed that the BJP is free from nepotism (Table 1).

A little less than half of the voters (45%) believe that the BJP should refrain from accepting leaders with a tarnished image, a sentiment shared by half of the BJP supporters (51%). However, a significant minority, 21%, see no issue with parties accepting such leaders, this view being more pronounced among those voting for the BJP allies (32%) than those voting for the BJP (21%) (Table 2).

Voters were asked whether leaders are joining the BJP to protect themselves from law enforcement agencies such as the ED or the CBI. A large proportion of respondents (46%) believes that these leaders are seeking protection from the CBI or the ED, while close to three in 10 (27%) believe that these leaders genuinely like the party (Table 3).

The data suggest that nearly half of the voters (45%) believe that ideological alignment during elections holds little significance, as everything is fair in politics (Table 4).

The biggest endorsement of this sentiment that "everything is fair in politics" comes from voters of the BJP allies, the BSP, and the Congress allies. Over 50% feel this approach is acceptable (Table 5).

Vibha Attri and Devesh Kumar are researchers at CSDS-Lokniti

A banner with the pictures of Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi on a road in Gujarat during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in March. REUTERS

Table 1: BJP versus Congress. Which party is nepotistic?

BJP is...	%
Less nepotistic than Congress	25
As nepotistic as Congress	24
Not nepotistic at all	15
No opinion	36

Question asked: *Earlier people used to say that BJP was less nepotistic than Congress. Now, some people believe BJP has become as nepotistic as Congress. What do you think?*

Table 2: Assessing voters' sentiment: BJP's decision to accept tainted leaders from rival parties

(in %)

	BJP shouldn't take leaders that have a tainted image	There is nothing wrong in taking leaders from other parties even if they have a tainted image	No response
Overall	**45**	**21**	**34**
Among BJP voters	51	21	28
Among BJP allies	36	32	32

Question asked: *I will read out two statements. Please tell me which one do you agree with the most?*

Table 3: Public views on leaders joining BJP from Opposition parties

	(%)
They are just protecting themselves from enforcement agencies like ED or CBI	46
The leaders like the party	27
No response	27

Question asked: *Recently, many leaders from different parties have joined the BJP. Some people say that these leaders like the party and hence joined it, while others believe that they are using BJP as a shield to protect themselves from enforcement agencies like ED or CBI. What is your opinion?*

Table 4: How much support for ideology-driven alliances

	(%)
Everything is fair in politics, political parties can form alliances with any party during elections	45
Political parties should refrain from forming alliances with other parties that are ideologically very different	24
No response	31

Question asked: *I will read out two statements. Please tell me which one do you agree with the most?*

Table 5: Support for ideology-driven alliances among the voters of different parties

(in %)

Among the voters of...	Everything is fair in politics; political parties can form alliances with any party during elections	Political parties should refrain from forming alliances with other parties that are ideologically very different
Congress	44	23
Congress allies	51	23
BJP	45	24
BJP allies	55	18
BSP	52	15
Left parties	42	40
Other parties	38	26

Note: *Rest did not respond*

Voters view on affirmative action policy framework

Hilal Ahmed

A new imagination of social justice, it seems, is gradually replacing the conventional discourse of inclusion or exclusion in contemporary India.

There is an overwhelming support for the complete secularisation of the affirmative action policy framework in the country, especially with regard to the inclusion of Dalit Muslims in the Schedule Caste (SC) category.

On the other hand, this deeply secular impulse is not yet directly linked to any political formation. Despite the fact that caste census is recognised as an important policy consideration, there is an apprehension about the seriousness of the political class about it.

Over 57% respondents of the survey assert that the scope of SC category must be expanded to provide reservation to both Hindu and Muslim Dalits (Table 1).

Table 2 shows that a majority of Hindu upper castes (who do not have reservation) and Hindu Dalits (who are the beneficiary of reservation) hold the view that SC list should be more inclusive. This assertion goes against the dominant view that the purpose of reservation in India is to reform Hinduism.

The survey also shows that the emerging notion of social justice is not clearly articulated in electoral terms. One finds a rather vague and overlapping response to the Congress's support for a countrywide caste census. Around 32% respondents view this demand as a political tool, while 24% find it a serious political concern (Table 3).

Hilal Ahmed is Associate Professor at CSDS

Table 1: Quota to Muslims

Opinion on giving quota to Muslims in SC category	%
In government jobs, in the SC category, both Hindus and Muslims should be given reservation	57
In government jobs, in the SC category, only Hindus should be given reservation	19
No response	24

Question asked: *I will now read out two statements. Please tell me which one do you agree with the most?*

Table 2: Opinion across different caste/communities on giving quota to Muslims in SC category

(in %)

Caste/ communities	In govt. jobs, in SC category, only Hindus should be given reservation	In govt. jobs, in SC category, both Hindus, Muslims should get reservation
Hindu upper caste	25	53
Hindu OBC	20	57
Hindu SCs	28	52
Hindu STs	16	52
Muslims	6	71
Other religious minorities	12	55

Note: *Rest did not respond*

Table 3: Opinion on Cong. intention of conducting caste census

	%
Using it as a political tool	32
Congress/INDIA serious about caste census	24
Expressed no opinion	28
Not aware of caste census	16

Question asked: *Do you think Cong. or other parties of INDIA bloc are serious about the caste census or is it being used as a political tool?*

Table 4: Opinion across communities on conducting caste census

Caste/communities	Using it as a political tool (%)	Cong./INDIA serious about caste census (%)
Overall	32	24
Hindu upper caste	39	23
Hindu OBC	33	25
Hindu SCs	29	22
Hindu STs	31	19
Muslims	20	28
Other religious minorities	30	17

Note: *Rest either did not respond or were not aware about caste census*

Level of voter trust in select institutions and processes

Sandeep Shastri

The CSDS-Lokniti pre-poll survey provides some insights into the level of trust the voter has in some key institutions and processes.

The data clearly indicate the fact that the trust of the voter in the Election Commission has declined compared with five years ago.

While there is a marginal increase in those who have some trust in the EC, the percentage of those who do not have much trust has doubled compared with five years ago (Table 1).

A linked factor is the public confidence in the scope for manipulation of electronic voting machines (EVM). One-sixth of the respondents believe that there is a lot of scope for manipulation of EVMs by the ruling party. Close to three in 10 believe that there is some scope for manipulation. Taken together, it accounts for close to half of the respondents. A little over one-fourth of the respondents believe that EVMs cannot be subjected to manipulation (Table 2).

The respondents were more or less equally divided among those who felt that agencies like the ED and the CBI were being used as a political vendetta tool and those who said that the agencies were working within the contours of law (Table 3).

Sandeep Shastri is Director-Academics, NITTE Education Trust, and the National Coordinator of the Lokniti Network

Table 1: Trust in the Election Commission of India has declined

Trust in Election Commission of India	Pre-poll 2024 (%)	Post-poll 2019 (%)
Great extent	28	51
Some extent	30	27
Not much	14	7
Not at all	9	5

Note: *Rest did not respond or were not aware about the EC*

Question asked: *To what extent do you trust the Election Commission? To a great extent, to some extent, not much, or not at all*

Question asked in 2019: *How much trust do you have in Election Commission's fairness in conducting elections? A lot of trust, some trust, not much, or not at all*

Table 2: Public perception on EVM manipulation

Likelihood that EVMs can be manipulated by the ruling party...	(%)
A lot	17
Somewhat	28
Not much	11
Not at all	16

Note: *Rest did not respond or were not aware about EVMs*

Question asked: *How likely is it that EVMs can be manipulated by the ruling party?*

Table 3: Views on CBI, ED, and so on

	Government agencies like the CBI, ED are ...		
	Being used for political vendetta (%)	Working within the bounds of the law (%)	No response (%)
Overall	**35**	**31**	**34**
NDA voters	21	45	34
INDIA voters	51	19	30
Voters of other parties	41	21	38

Note: *Rest did not respond*

Question asked: *People have different views about government agencies like CBI, ED, and so on. Some people believe that they are being used against the Opposition parties by the BJP for political vendetta whereas others believe that these agencies are doing their job within the bounds of the law. What is your opinion?*

Key decisions and political implication for BJP

Jyoti Mishra
Abhinav Pankaj Borbora

In its second term, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government made significant constitutional changes and initiated eye-catching projects, sparking debates about its future plans. In this context, the revocation of Article 370, hosting the G-20 summit, and plans for a Uniform Civil Code stand out as prominent examples. While the government pushed these initiatives vigorously, the Opposition expressed scepticism.

The CSDS-Lokniti pre-poll study sheds light on how the Indian voters perceived these actions of the government.

The Union government revoked Jammu and Kashmir's special status under Article 370 a few months into its second term. The pre-poll study indicates that one in three (34%) voters view this as a positive step, whereas one in six (16%) support the decision but question the method. On the other hand, one in five (20%) voters are not aware of Article 370 and another two in 10 (22%) did not comment on it, revealing that significant political issues may not reach all voters (Table 1).

The government also highlighted its success in hosting the G-20 summit in India. However, nearly three in five (63%) respondents were not aware of the summit, while nearly two in five (37%) had heard about it (Table 2). Moreover, urban voters showed higher awareness (55%) compared with voters living in rural areas (32%) (Table 3).

The third important issue revolves around the Uniform Civil Code (UCC). According to the survey, nearly three in 10 (29%) voters believe that the UCC will empower women and provide greater equality to them, whereas two in 10 (19%) voters say that the UCC might interfere with religious traditions.

The findings show that a considerable section of voters remains oblivious to some of the leading issues around which the government and the Opposition have tried to frame India's political discourse.

Jyoti Mishra and Abhinav Borbora are researchers at CSDS-Lokniti

Table 1: Opinion on the removal of Article 370

Opinion on Article 370...	%
Was a good step	34
Was a good step but it was not done in the right way	16
Was a bad step	8
Expressed no opinion	22
Not aware of Article 370	20

Question asked: *I will read out three statements about the removal of Article 370. Please tell me which one do you agree with the most?*

Table 2: Awareness about the G-20 summit held in India

Awareness about G-20 summit	%
Aware about G-20 summit	37
Not aware about G-20 summit	63

Question asked: *Have you heard or read about the G-20 summit, 2023 held in New Delhi?*

Table 3: Higher awareness among those with high media exposure and city dwellers

(in %)

	Aware of G-20 summit
Overall	**37**
LEVEL OF MEDIA EXPOSURE	
No exposure	14
Low exposure	27
Moderate exposure	46
High exposure	60
LOCALITIES	
Village	32
Town	44
City	55

Table 4: G-20 summit showed India's rising power

Among those who are aware about G-20	%
Showcasing of India's growing power	30
It will strengthen our foreign trade and economy	23
NDA government's foreign policy achievement	16
Wastage of money	12
Political stunt	10

Note: *Rest did not respond*

Question asked: *(If heard) What is your opinion about G-20 summit held in India?*

Table 5: Opinion on the Uniform Civil Code's impact

Opinion on Uniform Civil Code...	%
The law will empower women	29
The law might interfere with religious traditions	19
Expressed no opinion	26
Not aware of UCC	26

Question asked: *The government is planning to introduce the Uniform Civil Code. The law has already been implemented in Uttarakhand. Some people believe that this law will empower women, while others say that this may interfere with unique religious traditions of communities?*

Table 6: Opinion across different caste and communities on the Uniform Civil Code

(in %)

Religious groups	Opinion on Uniform Civil Code...			
	The law will empower women	The law might interfere with religious traditions	Expressed no opinion	Not aware of UCC
Overall	29	19	26	26
Hindu	31	18	26	25
Muslim	17	29	26	28
Christian	25	18	24	33
Sikh	10	10	29	51
Other religious minorities	26	27	20	27

ELECTIONS 2024

Unemployment, inflation biggest issues: Rahul

Unemployment and inflation are the two biggest issues but there is a conspiracy of silence in the media to hide failures of the Modi government in solving issues of the people, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said in Rajasthan on Thursday.

He said farmers are asking for a minimum support price for their crops, youth are seeking jobs, and women want relief from inflation, but no one is listening.

The BJP has taken money from big industrialists through electoral bonds, he said, adding that the election is a battle between the poor people and billionaires.

"The amount of money that the Modi government has given to billionaires, we will give the same amount of money to the poor, the backward, Dalits and Adivasis," he added.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressing an election rally in Rajasthan on Thursday. PTI

Former Cong. spokesperson joins the BJP

After resigning from the Congress, former party spokesperson Rohan Gupta on Thursday joined the BJP and slammed the Opposition party for insulting "Sanatana dharma" and added that he was asked to keep quiet about the Ram Temple consecration in Ayodhya.

Mr. Gupta and some other leaders joined the BJP in the presence of Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri and party national general secretary Vinod Tawde. Mr. Gupta had resigned from the Opposition party last month a day after withdrawing from the electoral race as a Congress candidate from Ahmedabad East Lok Sabha seat.

Slamming the Congress, Mr. Gupta said it has become directionless and was full of contradictions, leading to loss of credibility.

"The BJP's politicisation of religion went too far when PM performed the pran pratishtha at the Ram Mandir, for which he is clearly not qualified

SHASHI THAROOR
Congress leader

Over one lakh people pledge to vote in Assam

A total of 1,59,191 people pledged to vote in Tinsukia district of Assam on Wednesday, setting a national record for such an exercise in an hour, officials said on Thursday. The event was organised to promote ethical voting in Dibrugarh Lok Sabha constituency on April 19.

"...you have to be conscious of implications... The PM raised Katchatheevu issue without looking at implications on our ties with Sri Lanka

YASHWANT SINHA
Former Finance Minister

Caught in middle: Haisat Ali (left) and Mohammad Arshad at their sweet shop at Kwakta in Bishnupur district of Manipur on Thursday. RITU RAJ KONWAR

In Kwakta, muted Id amid foreboding of violence

Abhinay Lakshman
KWAKTA (MANIPUR)

This Id-ul-Fitr has been significantly different for the largely Muslim residents of Kwakta in Manipur – a small town bang in the middle of the buffer zone created by security forces to keep the Meitei and the Kuki-Zo communities from fighting each other. In addition to being the first Id-ul-Fitr they are celebrating since the conflict began on May 3 last year, it also falls just ahead of the Lok Sabha election.

While it has always been an annual ritual, more so in election years, for politicians cutting across party lines to visit the town and exchange greetings, this Id has been eerily quiet in Kwakta, residents said. With anger rising in the town over the BJP governments' handling of the conflict and their failure to protect Kwakta's interests, the Congress has made the first move to reach out to these voters, forcing the BJP to now play a careful game of catch-up using its ally, the National People's Party.

"Usually, during an election year, there would be a beeline of politicians from across party lines waiting to send food items for Iftar gatherings during Ramzan. They would come in with their convoys to attend the Id prayers and exchange greetings. We've seen none of that so far," Haisat Ali, 42, tells *The Hindu* as he sets up the display rack at his Al-Taufeeq Hotel in Kwakta Bazaar.

Haisat Ali,as most residents of the town, is a Meitei Muslim – people who are also known as Meitei Pangals in Manipur. This small community of Muslims, who constitute around 8% of the State's population, have been caught in the middle of the conflict since it began, both literally and figuratively.

And as election campaigning heats up all over Inner Manipur, Kwakta, on its edges, is an exception. There are no signs of campaign posters on shutters or doors and residents are more concerned about the violence resuming after the election than the contest itself.

'Bearing the brunt'

Throughout the conflict, the Meitei Pangals at Kwakta have been facing the brunt of blockades from both communities."Our own supply chains have been hit. Each community suspects us of helping the other community out. As a result, everything has become expensive here," Mr. Ali said. "As for the election, all we are thinking about is who can help bring an end to this."

"The BJP is known to be a communal party. I am certain that had the Congress been in power, none of this would have happened," 30-year-old Abdullah, a cook at another hotel a few doors down, quipped.

Taking advantage of this anger, the Congress has made the first move to reach out to the Meitei Pangal voters in Kwakta. "Right now, all discussions in the town are about Mr. Bimol Akoijam, the Congress candidate. His team members had sent food items for our Iftar gathering which ignited the conversation," Mr. Arshad said.

But the absence of outright efforts from the BJP does not mean that a campaign is not under way to sway the Pangal voters towards their candidate Th. Basanta Kumar Singh. The NPP MLA Thongam Shanti Singh has been aggressively campaigning for Mr. Singh.

25 seats, 8 States: road to Lok Sabha passes through the Northeast route

Having won 19 of these 25 seats in 2019, the NDA has set the bar even higher in the region, as part of its strategy to cross 400 seats across the country; Congress struggles to hold on to its bastions, having been virtually wiped out in Arunachal, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura

OVERVIEW

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

The 25 Lok Sabha seats across the eight States in the northeast were like an appendix until the dawn of the coalition era in 1989 turned regional parties into stakeholders at the Centre. Ahead of the 2024 election, these seats have become crucial for parties of all hues and sizes to achieve their targets.

Barring a few "neutral" entities, such as Assam's All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) and Mizoram's ruling Zoram People's Movement, most regional parties in the northeast are members of the BJP-helmed North East Democratic Alliance and so, by default, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre. The exceptions are the Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP) and the Raijor Dal, led by former activist Akhil Gogoi, which are constituents of the Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance.

Having won 19 of these 25 seats in 2019, the NDA has set the bar even higher in the region, as part of its strategy to cross 400 seats across the country.

"We are confident of touching 22 in the northeast this time," Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

Polling in 16 constituencies in the region will be held in the first phase on April 19, along with the Assembly elections in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Voting in the remaining nine seats – all in Assam – are scheduled to take place in the next two phases.

The BJP enjoys an edge in Arunachal Pradesh, with 10 of the 60 Assembly seats already in the bag unopposed. It is confident of winning most of the remaining seats.

The party is contesting most of the 32 Assembly seats and the lone Lok Sabha seat in Sikkim, after calling off its alliance with the ruling Sikkim Krantikari Morcha. As Meghalaya Chief Minister and National People's Party (NPP) chief Conrad K. Sangma puts it, it is not unusual for allies and temporary rivals to face each other in electoral battles.

Putting up a show: BJP Dibrugarh candidate Sarbananda Sonowal beats the drum in Dibrugarh on Tuesday. ANI

Past results

The table shows the party-wise winners and their vote shares in the 2019 Lok Sabha election, across the northeastern region

Party	Wins	Vote share
BJP	14	33.7
Congress	4	20.2
AIUDF	1	4.3
IND	1	3.7
MNF	1	0.8
NDPP	1	1.7
NPEP	1	1.5
NPF	1	1.3
SKM	1	0.6

Fluid alliances

The NPP, for instance, is supporting the BJP's candidates for the two Lok Sabha seats in Arunachal Pradesh – including Union Minister Kiren Rijiju – but is rivalling the party in 23 Assembly seats in the State. The BJP has returned the favour in Meghalaya, claiming that its alliance is more cohesive than that of the Congress.

The BJP underlines the distribution of Lok Sabha seats to its allies in Assam as a case in point. It is contesting 11 out of 14 seats from the State, leaving two to the Asom Gana Parishad and one to the United People's Party Liberal.

The Congress, on the other hand, is contesting 13 Lok Sabha seats from Assam, while the AJP is contesting one. The Left Front sulked after its plea to field a candidate from the Barpeta seat was reportedly overlooked, while the Aam Aadmi Party defied an "understanding" to contest two seats – one against the Congress and the other against the AJP.

Insisting that its bloc is in order, the Congress is hopeful of denying the NDA a near-clean sweep in the northeast. "Setting a target indicates manipulative practices in place to achieve it. Our goal is to stop a majoritarian party from retaining the power to be more authoritative and oppressive," said Gaurav Gogoi, the tallest leader of the Congress in the northeast. He is contesting the Jorhat Lok Sabha seat.

But the Congress has been struggling to hold on to its bastions in the region. It has been virtually wiped out in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, and Tripura, which together account for nine seats.

Delimitation in Assam

Of the four seats the party won in 2019, three are in Assam. While the Kaliabor seat ceased to exist, the Barpeta and Nagaon seats changed shape and demographic composition after the delimitation exercise in 2023. In the fourth seat, in Meghalaya's Shillong, it is a do-or-die battle for former Union Minister Vincent H. Pala, who is eyeing a fourth straight term.

The Congress believes it can defy the odds in conflict-scarred Manipur to win two Lok Sabha seats in the State – Inner Manipur, covering much of the Imphal Valley, and Outer Manipur, straddling the tribal hills. It is banking on the people's anger against an "indifferent Prime Minister" and the "reign of terror" in the State under Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to pip the BJP in the two constituencies.

The Naga People's Front, an ally of the BJP, is equally confident of snagging Outer Manipur, given that almost half the constituency is dominated by the Kuki-Zo community, which has decided to boycott the polls to protest injustice by the government.

The Jorhat seat aside, a major worry for the Congress in Assam is retaining the Barpeta and Nagaon seats, where it will compete for Muslim votes with the minority-driven AIUDF, which it refers to as the BJP's 'B-team'.

"Everyone knows we formed an alliance with the Congress [for the 2021 Assam Assembly election], never with the BJP. But Congress, facing the BJP's drive to wipe it off, spurned us," said AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal, who seeks to retain the Dhubri seat.

A cliffhanger on the cards in Puducherry as Congress veteran takes on BJP heavyweight

M. Dinesh Varma
PUDUCHERRY

More than being a constituency where national rivals BJP and Congress are engaged in a direct fight, the battle for the lone Lok Sabha seat in Puducherry on April 19 has all the makings of a political cliffhanger. V. Vaithilingam, Congress veteran, sitting MP and two-time Chief Minister, is taking on former Congressman-turned-*bete noire*, and now an ascendant BJP leader, Home Minister A. Namassivayam, in a tight contest.

Fate, it would appear, has convened another face-off between the two leaders who were once in the race to the post of Chief Minister following the Congress-Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) alliance's win in the 2016 Assembly election – the Congress high command eventually naming former Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office V. Narayanasamy to the coveted chair.

It is not hard to see why Mr. Namassivayam's candidature has made it a prestige fight for the Congress. As Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) chief, Mr. Namassivayam played a key role in the Congress-DMK combine's victory in the 2016 Assembly election, and had made no secret of his frustrations during his time as Minister in the Narayanasamy Cabinet.

Matters blew up a few months before the next Assembly election in January 2021, when Mr. Namassivayam quit as Minister and resigned from the MLA post to join the BJP. This would be the first of several body blows to the Congress as high-profile exits followed and precipitated the collapse of the Narayanasamy government in a Trust Motion in the Assembly.

After the All India N.R. Congress-BJP government came to power in the 2021 Assembly election, Mr. Namassivayam was allocated the Home portfolio – usually held by the Chief Minister. He was also inducted into the BJP's national executive, an 80-member decision-making body.

Clash of titans: Congress candidate V. Vaithilingam, along with INDIA bloc leaders, campaigning in Puducherry. S.S. KUMAR

Third front issues

In 2024, as important as it is for the Congress-led INDIA bloc and the BJP-led NDA to put on a strong performance, both fronts must also be acutely aware that the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) – now delinked from the NDA – presents a third force capable of tilting the scales to an extent, disproportionate to its vote share or lack of legislative representation, especially if the race gets tight.

In contrast to the INDIA and the NDA fronts which opted for political stature and experience in determining candidature, the AIADMK has pitched a new face and fielded its youth wing secretary G. Thamizhvendhan, who hails from the fisher community.

The Naam Tamilar Katchi's R. Menaga, a Siddha practitioner, is among the three women in a field of 26 candidates who are seeking a mandate from an electorate of 10,23,699 lakh voters.

The Congress, notwithstanding remarkable electoral statistics from the past – direct wins in 10 out of 14 previous Lok Sabha elections and two wins by allies the AIADMK (1977) and the PMK (2004) – has its work cut out as it tries to regain prominence after the double blow in 2021. Then, even before the Congress could fully get over the fall of the Narayanasamy government in February, further ignominy ensued in the Assembly election when the party suffered its worst-ever electoral drubbing in a place considered a bastion.

And though Mr. Vaithilingam won in 2019 by a record margin of about 1.97 lakh votes over his AINRC rival and political greenhorn K. Narayanasamy, a victory that stood out amid morale-hurting losses for the Congress at the national level, he is locking horns with a tougher opponent in Mr. Namassivayam, who wields considerable clout with the Vanniyar community.

Apart from banking on a Dalit-minority vote consolidation with support of allies – the DMK, Left and the Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) – the Congress is also hoping the solo run of the AIADMK, unlike in 2019 when it was in the NDA fold, would offset any increased consolidation of Vanniyar votes as two influential leaders from the community, Mr. Namassivayam and Chief Minister N. Rangaswamy, now work in tandem.

For a Congress grappling with existential challenges, a win goes far beyond sweet revenge as it could mark the beginning of a comeback. For the BJP, which now has six elected MLAs, three nominated MLAs, and a Rajya Sabha MP from the Union Territory, adding a Lok Sabha seat to its expanding kitty will mark another step towards cultivating a sphere of political sway in the region.

Strong govt. kills terrorists in their homes: PM

Ishita Mishra
DEHRADUN

Hailing the 10 years of 'strong' government at the Centre, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, addressing a rally in Rishikesh on Thursday, said 'the strong government under Modi kills terrorists in their homes'.

He launched a scathing attack on the Opposition by saying that terrorism had flourished in India due to its weak government.

Highlighting the schemes brought in by his government for soldiers, he said that if the Congress had been in power, One Rank, One Pension (OROP) would have never been implemented, but the Modi government fulfilled the guarantee.

"During the Congress rule, soldiers did not even have bulletproof jackets, but the BJP government has worked to protect the soldiers by providing Indian-made bulletproof jackets. The weak Congress government could not provide modern infrastructure to the borders, but under the BJP government, modern roads and tunnels are being built till the border areas," he said.

From Page One

ADB pegs India's GDP growth at 7% in 2024-25

South Asia is expected to grow 6.3% this year and 6.6% in 2025.

Higher incomes will spur consumer demand and confidence levels in urban consumers has improved, so demand is expected to rise from those areas with falling inflation and a gradual improvement in cities' labour markets, the ADB reckoned. However, a rise in imports to meet domestic demand could widen the Current Account Deficit moderately to 1.7% of GDP this year and next year, it said.

Muted exports, FDI inflows

India's growth, the report said, will be driven by public and private sector investment demand and by gradual improvement in consumer demand as the rural economy improves. While exports are likely to be relatively muted this year as growth in major advanced economies slows down, they will improve in 2025-26.

Downside risks

Stressing that India's economic outlook depends on price and financial market stability that are crucial for consumer and business confidence, the ADB said its projections face a downside risk from global shocks such as a spike in crude oil and energy prices leading to higher global inflation and tighter financial conditions.

"On the domestic side, there is a risk of underperformance in agriculture due to weather shocks that can affect demand and inflation," it noted.

Among upside risks to its forecast, the ADB said, was faster-than-expected FDI inflow, particularly into manufacturing, which would improve output as well as productivity. "Better-than-expected global growth could boost exports and thus growth," it added.

India's growth, the report said, will be driven by public and private sector investment demand. GETTY IMAGES

Sound and stable ties in region's interest: China

Reacting to PM's remarks, Beijing calls for India to work with China to take the bilateral relations forward; Modi's comments highly significant, reflect his cautious and careful tone, say diplomats

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI/BEIJING

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments about tensions at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) are "highly significant", according to Indian foreign affairs experts. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reacted to his remarks on Thursday, calling for India to work with China to "put the bilateral relations forward on a sound and stable track".

In an interview to the U.S.-based magazine *Newsweek*, published on Wednesday, Mr. Modi had broken his silence on India's ties with China and standoff at the LAC, which has been going on since April 2020. He had called for the two sides to "urgently address the prolonged situation on our borders so that the abnormality in our bilateral interactions can be put behind us". "I hope and believe that through positive and constructive bilateral engagement at the diplomatic and military levels, we will be able to restore and sustain peace and tranquillity in our borders," the PM had added.

Modi has so far avoided directly referring to China or making views in public about the state of ties over the past four years. FILE PHOTO

'Common interests'

On Thursday, Chinese MFA spokesperson Mao Ning said at a media briefing that Mr. Modi's comments had been "noted" and that "sound and stable China-India relations serve the common interests of both sides and are conducive to peace and development of the region and beyond". Ms. Mao added, however, that the boundary question did not "represent the entirety of China-India relations".

The PM's comments were "highly significant", according to Pankaj Saran, who was the Deputy National Security Advisor between 2018 and 2021.

"This is an important signal, to China, the U.S. and to the world at large," he said, indicating that the PM may have been laying the ground to address issues with China as a priority in his third term, if he is re-elected in the upcoming general election.

He also pointed to the changes in China's ties with other global players, including renewed talks with the U.S. and Europe, and closer engagement with Russia, as pertinent. Senior U.S. officials have visited Beijing recently, and Chinese President Xi Jinping is due to visit France next month in his first trip to Europe since 2019.

Ministers' tough talk

Mr. Modi has thus far avoided directly referring to China or making any comments in public or in Parliament about the state of ties over the past four years. In addition, his words come in the wake of a number of tougher statements by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who has repeatedly accused China of violating its agreements with India by amassing troops at the LAC.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has slammed China for renaming places in Arunachal Pradesh, suggesting that India would do the same, and blaming Beijing for "deteriorating ties". Home Minister Amit Shah had also said that because of India's vigilance, Chinese troops had not been able to take "an inch of Indian territory".

"The PM's remarks reflect the cautious and careful tone adopted by Mr. Modi right since the Galwan incident," said former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran. The comments might denote "a signal to China that there is a readiness to re-engage and restore relations," he added.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, India's former Ambassador to China Ashok Kantha said that it was also important that the PM stressed India's stand that normalcy in the relationship would be contingent on restoration of the situation at the border.

Other diplomats said that the PM's comments denoted a "softening of stance", including his comments on the Quad, where he likened the Quad to other groupings that India is a part of.

In her response, Ms. Ning also said that China and India have maintained "close communication" and have made positive progress on the border situation. "We hope that India will work with China, approach the bilateral relations from a strategic height and long-term perspective, keep building trust and engaging in dialogue and cooperation," the spokesperson added.

(With inputs from Nikhil M. Babu, who is in Beijing at the invitation of the China Public Diplomacy Association)

PM's remarks on ties with China 'feeble, ineffective': Congress

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Party says his views are disrespectful to martyrs who made supreme sacrifice in defending borders

The Congress on Thursday slammed Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "ineffective and feeble" response to China over alleged border incursions, and demanded an apology from him.

Commenting on the Prime Minister's interview to the U.S.-based magazine *Newsweek*, Congress general secretary (communication) Jairam Ramesh said that "the Prime Minister was at his cowardly worst".

"His only comment on China's repeated infringements on Indian sovereignty was that the India-China border situation needs to be addressed urgently to resolve the 'abnormality' in the bilateral interactions," Mr. Ramesh said in a post on X.

The Congress leader said that the Prime Minister had a chance to send a powerful message to China, but his "ineffective and feeble response" is likely to encourage China further in asserting its claim on Indian territory.

"The Prime Minister's reaction to the China issue is not only disgraceful but also disrespectful to our martyrs who made the supreme sacrifice in defending our borders," Mr. Ramesh said.

Referring to Mr. Modi's statement at an all-party meeting post the Galwan clashes, the Congress leader said Mr. Modi should apologise to the public for keeping "the nation in the dark about his failures in protecting the borders with China".

"The Prime Minister should apologise to the 140 crore Indians for deceiving them on national television on June 19, 2020, with his statement *Na Koi Ghusa Hai, Na Hi Koi Ghus Aaya hai* [None has entered inside our territory]...," Mr. Ramesh said.

For the past four years, the Congress has targeted the PM and his government for giving a "clean chit" to China on the issue of border transgressions.

Soon after Home Minister Amit Shah had claimed in an election rally last Tuesday that China had not occupied "an inch of Indian territory", Mr. Ramesh had lashed out at the Union Minister.

"Now, the only man who can give the Prime Minister competition in lying and falsifying facts – his Home Minister – has also given a clean chit to China. He has claimed that China 'couldn't encroach a single inch of land' under the Modi government," the Congress leader had said.

Mr. Ramesh said "facts" suggest that China has occupied 2,000 sq km of Indian soil, taken over 26 out of 65 patrolling points in Ladakh, and built complete villages 50-60 km deep inside Arunachal Pradesh.

Apple changes hacking alert wording after India 'pressure'

They claimed that a fresh batch of such notifications was sent to users in India and 91 other countries. However, hours after these reports came up, no user in any of these countries has publicly reported receiving such an alert.

Last November, Apple and the Centre misleadingly claimed that users in 150 countries received such hacking alerts, when only users in India reported receiving them that week.

Security helpline

An Apple spokesperson declined to comment on record on the change in language. Three people who have received such alerts previously in India told *The Hindu* that they didn't receive any in the last day. Rights group Amnesty International has opened a digital security helpline for individuals who received the alert.

Last December, *The Washington Post* reported that "senior Modi administration officials called Apple's India representatives to demand that the company help soften the political impact of the warnings", referring to November's alerts. At least two individuals who received the alerts that month – the Congress party's Praveen Chakravarty and news portal The Wire's founder editor Siddharth Varadarajan – found in separate forensic examinations that their phones had traces of the Pegasus spyware.

In a first in 40 years, Indian film to vie for Cannes prize

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Indian filmmaker Payal Kapadia's *All We Imagine As Light* on Thursday scripted history by becoming the first Indian title in over 40 years to feature in the prestigious Competition section of the Cannes Film Festival, where it will vie for the top prize Palme d'Or.

Iris Knobloch, president of the Cannes Festival, and Thierry Fremaux, General Delegate, announced the official selection line-up for the 2024 edition of the gala at a press conference streamed live from Cannes, France.

All We Imagine As Light will be presented under the main segment alongside 19 other titles.

'No shortage of capital funds due to consolidated budget of 3 Services'

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

There will be no shortage of capital funds for the Indian Air Force (IAF) because of consolidation of the demand of three Services in the defence budget for 2024-25, the IAF has said. Funds sought for 2024-25 have already been allotted to the Services.

Prior to February 2024, capital funds had been allocated separately to the Army, the Navy and the Air Force.

"The Integrated Capability Development Programme, which is a 10-year plan, would be finalised by headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) and approved by the government. This would be prepared after taking inputs from the service headquarters. The Chief of Defence Staff would provide further inputs to the government after consulting the Service Chiefs," the IAF said in a written reply to questions from *The Hindu*.

Up and away: Prior to 2024, capital funds from the Budget were allocated separately to the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. PTI

In the interim Budget presented in February, the government decided to consolidate the capital allocation for the three Services based on similar items of expenditure such as land, aircraft and aeroengines, and heavy and medium vehicles. This mechanism will also expedite decision-making and ensure better utilisation of the capital budget, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) had stated earlier.

Flexibility in funds

The government has consolidated the demand of the three services in the defence budget to bring flexibility in financial management by enabling the MoD to reappropriate funds among the services, keeping in view the inter-Services priority, the IAF said.

The total allocation for defence stands at ₹6.2 lakh crore for 2024-25 of which the capital allocation, which is for new procurements, stands at ₹1.72 lakh crore. Of the ₹6.2 lakh crore, 27.67% went to capital, 14.82% for revenue expenditure on sustenance and operational preparedness, 30.68% for pay and allowances, 22.72% for defence pensions and 4.11% for civil organisations under the MoD.

Officials noted that the consolidation of the capital budget would help better address this issue.

Six children dead as school bus overturns in Haryana

The Hindu Bureau
GURUGRAM

Six students, in the 13-17 age group, were killed and 28 injured when a private school bus ferrying them overturned and hit a tree in Haryana's Mahendragarh district, around 100 km southwest of Delhi.

The police said the incident occurred on Thursday morning when bus driver Dharmender, under the influence of alcohol, tried to overtake another vehicle.

He was arrested along with school principal Deepti and secretary Hoshiar Singh.

After the news broke out, President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed shock over the incident.

PM Modi reviews heat preparedness

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday reviewed India's heat preparedness plans with senior officials on Thursday.

Thursday's meeting reviewed preparedness in terms of availability of essential medicines, intravenous fluids, ice packs, oral rehydration supplements and drinking water.

With polling set to begin later this month, health advisories by the Health Ministry and National Disaster Management Agency were sought to be translated into regional languages.

BJP plans to beat complacency and the heat

NEWS ANALYSIS

Nistula Hebbar
NEW DELHI

In an election where much of the narrative revolves around the inevitability of the BJP being voted back to power, the party is facing two challenges: complacency among party workers convinced of victory, and the record-breaking heat to hit the country this poll season.

The India Metereological Department has already predicted that the country will experience heat waves lasting 10 to 20 days, double that of the usual occurrence.

In meetings with the BJP's booth workers over video conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's pep talk often resembles advisories put out by the government over extreme weather events. At the '*Namo parivar tiffin baithak*' (Namo family tiffin meeting) of BJP workers in Varanasi, Mr. Modi's constituency, he went into quite a few details on how to beat the heat.

The BJP has urged its workers to ensure that voters turn up early to cast votes and escape the afternoon heat on election day. FILE PHOTO

"Along with your work, please take care of your health as well in this heat. I have heard that as early as now, in Varanasi, *sattu ki lassi* (gram flour shake) is available, *aam ka panna* (juice made of raw mangoes) is also available. I would request that all of you please drink these as much as possible and also have copious quantities of water, keep a bottle of water close by always. Only if you all are energetic and healthy, will I be worry free as to the outcome of the polls," he said.

In the '*Sushaktamaanu Ente* Booth' (my booth is strong) programme on March 30, he advised party workers in Kerala to ensure early voting. "On one hand, the poll heat is growing, and, on the other, the weather is also heating up. Do ensure that BJP supporters manage to vote early," he said.

While the heat is one factor, complacency among BJP voters and workers is another factor that worries the leadership. But Rajendra Agarwal, secretary in the Madhya Pradesh BJP and booth *prabhandhan* (organiser), said that workers are enthusiastic about a third term for the Modi government. "We have done booth categorisation and are currently concentrating on B and C category booths. Our effort on polling day will be a 5 a.m. exit for our booth-level agents and a target for every worker to get to early voting along with at least four families in their neighbourhood."

Ex-bureaucrats seek EC action against 'Opposition witch-hunt'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A group of former civil servants has flagged the "disturbing pattern of harassment and witch-hunt" of Opposition parties and politicians in the run-up to the general election, and asked the Election Commission (EC) to take "firm action".

In an open letter, the Constitutional Conduct Group said the arrest of a senior Opposition leader "reeks of motivated executive action".

APPEAL

Master Chandru S. Son of S.Siva 8 years admitted in Christian Medical College, Ranipet is suffering from Ostium Secundum Type Atrial Septal Defect with Left to Right Shunt and Normal LV Function. He has been advised undergo Atrial Septal Defect Closure at the earliest. The cost of operation would be about **Rs.2,20,000/-**.

Please send donation however small and save the boy. Cheque/D.D/M.O favouring **Save Poor Lives** A/c Chandru S. **Our Account Details:** S/B Account No. 20000913487. State Bank of India, R.A.Puram and IFSC CODE: SBIN0001855. You can Donate through Google Pay No. **9884607377**, UPI ID: **savepoorlives@oksbi**. All donations are exempted under 80G of I.T. ACT.

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SOLID SUPPORT

Can't have great days all time: Sangakkara backs Ashwin

SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

RR head coach Kumar Sangakkara backed R. Ashwin after he went through a nightmare against GT. "Ash is one of the greatest spinners to play the game, can't have great days all the time," he said.
The scores: RR 196/3 in 20 overs lost to GT 199/7 in 20 overs (Sai Sudharsan 35, Gill 72, Rashid 24 n.o., Kuldeep Sen 3/41).

BIGGEST FEAR

I am very scared of turbulence during a flight, says Kohli

ANI

Virat Kohli opened up about his biggest fear in a viral video. He said that whenever there is bad turbulence on flights, he is the first one to hold the sides of the seat. "I am very scared of turbulence. Oh my god, I look so stupid and like a fool. Whenever there is a bad turbulence, I hold the sides of the seat. So I feel like I am gone," Kohli said.

EXCEPTIONAL COMMITMENT

Rashid is a player wanted by all franchises, says Gavaskar

SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Rashid Khan's commitment makes him one of the most sought-after players in T20 leagues across the globe, feels Sunil Gavaskar. "He didn't hit the wickets like he usually does, but when he was needed with the bat he came and delivered," Gavaskar said. "This is the reason he's such a wanted player by all franchises."

SETBACK

LSG pacer Mayank to miss a few games because of swollen hip

SANDEEP SAXENA

Lucknow Super Giants' speedster Mayank Yadav will miss a few fixtures because of a swollen hip. Coach Justin Langer says it is important to be patient with the young pacer. "Young bowlers go through this phase of injuries and it will be a roller-coaster until their bodies get hardened. You have to be patient."

Mumbai Indians delight the faithful with a runaway win

A marauding Suryakumar and Kishan make a mockery of the RCB attack to overhaul a stiff target of 197 in just 15.3 overs to complement brilliant Bumrah's five-for; du Plessis, Karthik, and Patidar notch up delightful half-centuries for the visitors

IPL-17

Amol Karhadkar
MUMBAI

Suryakumar Yadav's blitzkrieg, coupled with Ishan Kishan and Rohit Sharma's initial assault, gave the home fans a lot to rejoice as Mumbai Indians made light of a target of 197, with more than four overs to spare, against Royal Challengers Bengaluru in an IPL clash at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday.

Had it not been for Jasprit Bumrah's sensational spell, Hardik Pandya and Co. may have been chasing a bigger target.

Phenomenal

The fact that the overall run-rate on the night was well in excess of 11 magnifies the enormity of Bumrah's spell of 4-0-21-5 to restrict RCB to 196 for eight.

The pace ace took just three deliveries to see the back of Virat Kohli as the Orange Cap-holder inside-edged an inswinger to Kishan behind the stumps.

In the death overs, Bumrah struck off successive balls in consecutive overs. He got rid of RCB's highest scorer Faf du Plessis (61, 40b, 4x4, 3x6) and followed it up with a toe-crusher that caught Mahipal Lomror plumb in front. The pacer then returned to remove Impact Player Saurav Chauhan and V. Vyshak.

Barring Bumrah, the other Mumbai bowlers could not contain the onslaught from du Plessis, Rajat Patidar (50, 26b, 3x4, 4x6) and Dinesh Karthik (53 not out, 23b, 5x4, 4x6). Karthik, in fact, gave Akash Madhwal a hammering, scoring 33 runs of 10 balls.

The Mumbai Indians batters then toyed with every RCB bowler.

Kishan and Rohit smashed 101 in 8.5 overs, the former dominating the partnership with a blistering 69 (34b, 7x4, 5x6).

Kishan's departure brought Suryakumar who made perhaps the biggest impact for an Impact Player this IPL. He tore into a hapless RCB attack to notch up a 17-ball 50 – MI's joint-fastest in its history.

Suryakumar's consecutive flicks off Akash Deep, that sailed into the second tier and nearly out of the park over square-leg, made the crowd go bonkers before he was dismissed for 52 (19b, 5x4, 4x6).

Hardik, who started with a first-ball six, wrapped it up with another hit to the stands in the 16th over.

Brilliant in blue: Suryakumar swung the game Mumbai Indians' way after Bumrah had ripped through the Royal Challengers line-up. EMMANUAL YOGINI

Next assignment

MI: April 14 vs **CSK**
Mumbai, 7.30 p.m.

RCB: April 15 vs **SRH**
Bengaluru, 7.30 p.m.

SCOREBOARD

ROYAL CHALLENGERS

Virat Kohli c Kishan b Bumrah 3 *(9b)*, Faf du Plessis c David b Bumrah 61 *(40b, 4x4, 3x6)*, Will Jacks c David b Madhwal 8 *(6b, 2x4)*, Rajat Patidar c Ishan b Coetzee 50 *(26b, 3x4, 4x6)*, Glenn Maxwell lbw b Shreyas Gopal 0 *(4b)*, Dinesh Karthik (not out) 53 *(23b, 5x4, 4x6)*, Mahipal Lomror lbw b Bumrah 0 *(1b)*, Saurav Chauhan (**Impact Player in place of Patidar**) c Madhwal b Bumrah 9 *(8b, 1x4)*, V. Vyshak c Nabi b Bumrah 0 *(1b)*, Akash Deep (not out) 2 *(2b)*; Extras (b-1, lb-1, w-8): 10; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 196.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-14 (Kohli, 2.3 overs), 2-23 (Jacks, 3.4), 3-105 (Patidar, 11.3), 4-108 (Maxwell, 12.2), 5-153 (du Plessis, 16.4), 6-153 (Lomror, 16.5), 7-170 (Chauhan, 18.3), 8-170 (Vyshak, 18.4).

MUMBAI INDIANS BOWLING

Nabi 1-0-7-0, Coetzee 4-0-42-1, Bumrah 4-0-21-5, Madhwal 4-0-57-1, Shreyas Gopal 4-0-32-1, Shepherd 2-0-22-0, Hardik 1-0-13-0.

MUMBAI INDIANS

Ishan Kishan c Kohli b Akash Deep 69 *(34b, 7x4, 5x6)*, Rohit Sharma c Topley b Jacks 38 *(24b, 3x4, 3x6)*, Suryakumar Yadav (**Impact Player in place of Madhwal**) c Lomror b Vyshak 52 *(19b, 5x4, 4x6)*, Hardik Pandya (not out) 21 *(6b, 3x6)*, Tilak Varma (not out) 16 *(10b, 3x4)*; Extras (w-3): 3; Total (for three wkts. in 15.3 overs): 199.

FALL OF WICKETS

1-101 (Kishan, 8.5), 2-139 (Rohit, 11.2), 3-176 (Suryakumar, 13.3).

RCB BOWLING

Topley 3-0-34-0, Siraj 3-0-37-0, Akash Deep 3.3-0-55-1, Maxwell 1-0-17-0, Vyshak 3-0-32-1, Jacks 2-0-24-1.

Toss: Mumbai Indians.

PoM: Bumrah.

MI won by seven wickets with 27 balls to spare.

LSG cannot afford to be complacent against DC

Shayan Acharya
LUCKNOW

It has been a satisfying campaign so far for Lucknow Super Giants with three wins from four outings.

However, as it gears up for the home IPL fixture at the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Stadium on Friday – against a struggling Delhi Capitals – LSG will be wary of complacency.

A swollen hip has forced young pacer Mayank Yadav, who bowls thunderbolts in excess of 150 kmph, to sit out, whereas the LSG management is yet to decide on the availability of the other pacer Mohsin Khan.

However, it still has enough firepower. Coming on the back of a five-wicket haul against Gujarat Titans, rookie pacer Yash Thakur will be hoping to keep the momentum going against Delhi Capitals, which is placed at the bottom of the table with just a solitary win.

With Delhi Capitals coach Ricky Ponting hoping that both Kuldeep Yadav and Mukesh Kumar will return to action against LSG, it will be interesting to see how they fare against the strong opening pair of Quinton de Kock and K.L. Rahul.

While Rahul is yet to convert his starts into something big, de Kock has blazed away to two half-centuries.

With some aggressive knocks, Nicholas Pooran has taken care of the middle-order even though Devdutt Padikkal has stuttered.

Capitals, meanwhile, have struggled in every department. While bowling at the death has been an area of concern, none of the batters – barring skipper Rishabh Pant and Tristan Stubbs – have been consistenct.

Young turks: Naveen and Yash would hope to carry the good form with the ball when Super Giants face Capitals. SANDEEP SAXENA

Points table

	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	5	4	1	8	0.871
Kolkata Knight Riders	4	3	1	6	1.528
Lucknow Super Giants	4	3	1	6	0.775
Chennai Super Kings	5	3	2	6	0.666
Sunrisers Hyderabad	5	3	2	6	0.344
Gujarat Titans	6	3	3	6	-0.637
Mumbai Indians	5	2	3	4	-0.073
Punjab Kings	5	2	3	4	-0.196
Royal Challengers	6	1	5	2	-1.124
Delhi Capitals	5	1	4	2	-1.370

After the MI-RCB match on April 11

Today's match

LUCKNOW SUPER GIANTS vs DELHI CAPITALS

Lucknow, 7.30 P.M.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: 3
LSG 3 | DC 0

PREVIOUS MEETING
LSG won by 50 runs, 2023

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

Advantage Barcelona and Atletico after first leg wins

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Associated Press
PARIS

Raphinha scored twice and substitute Andreas Christensen headed the winner as Barcelona won 3-2 at Paris Saint-Germain in the first leg of the Champions League quarterfinals on Wednesday.

In the other quarterfinal, Atletico Madrid beat Borussia Dortmund 2-1 at home.

Raphinha opened the scoring in the 37th while Ousmane Dembele equalised in the 48th. Three minutes later, midfielder Vitinha put PSG ahead in a pulsating match where Dembele hit the left post moments before Christensen's goal.

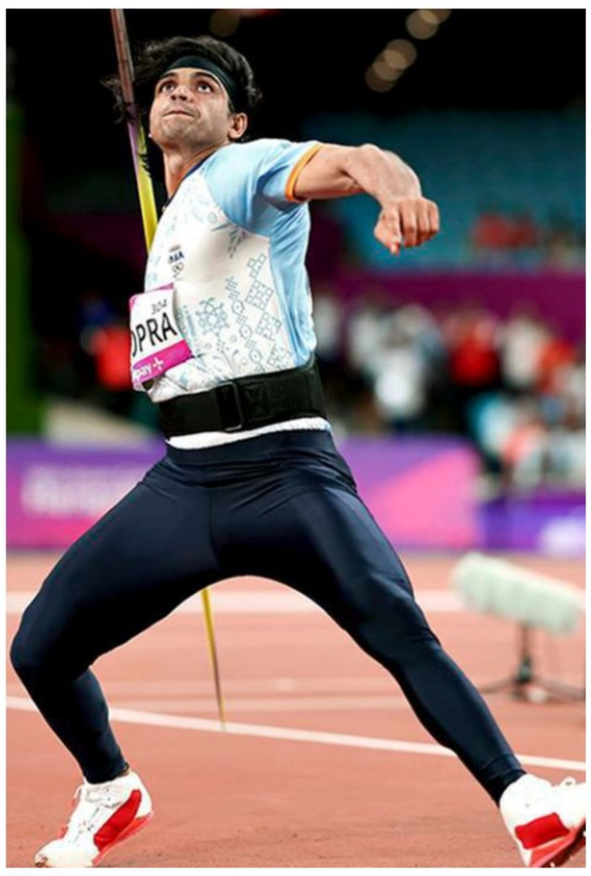
Raphinha curled Barcelona ahead after Donnarumma struggled with Lamine Yamal's slick right-wing cross, which the 16-year-old Spain winger exquisitely flicked with the outside of his left foot.

Atletico took a first-half lead with goals by Rodrigo De Paul and Samuel Lino and outplayed Dortmund during most of the match, but the German team stayed alive thanks to a late goal by substitute Sebastien Haller. Dortmund twice hit the woodwork in the final minutes.

The results (quarterfinal, first leg): Atletico Madrid 2 (De Paul 4, Lino 32) bt Borussia Dortmund 1 (Haller 81); PSG 2 (Dembele 48, Vitinha 51) lost to Barcelona 3 (Raphinha 37, 62, Christensen 77).

Easy finish: Raphinha, right, scores Barca's first into an open net with PSG's Donnaruma stranded out of position. AP

Confident Neeraj ready for the big season ahead



The aim: Neeraj says consistency is important and he tries to maintain it before trying to go beyond a certain mark. GETTY IMAGES

Uthra Ganesan
NEW DELHI

Neeraj Chopra will kick off his Olympic defence year at the Diamond League next month. The World champion is aware of the pressure of expectations, and is confident in his own abilities. Ahead of the season-opener in Doha, Neeraj spoke from his base in Turkey about his training so far, the season ahead and the competition.

On working with strength and conditioning coach Spencer MacKay: I had earlier worked with Spencer (S&C head coach at Inspire Institute of Sports) in 2019 after my elbow injury and surgery and it was very useful. We have been working together for the last 2-3 months The strength and fitness training is mainly before the actual season starts, when javelin-specific training is more in focus, which we have begun now. It has been good, we worked on certain exercises to increase strength.

On the 90m mark at Paris: The training has been good so hopefully, it can happen before the Olympics also but for me, consistency is important. I always try to maintain my level in every tournament before trying to go beyond a certain mark. For consistent performance, consistent training is the key. Managing your travel, diet and training is very important. Sometimes conditions can be challenging but the goal is to maintain your performance.

On challenging conditions: Heat doesn't bother me as much as cold weather – you have to constantly stay active to keep your body warm between throws. But whatever the conditions, you have to be prepared. I have competed in rain and strong winds because eventually, it is the same for everyone.

You have to be mentally prepared for every condition, otherwise you have lost even before the competition starts. Doha is known for long throws but there is also a lot of wind. If it assists you, great. If it is against you, you struggle. Last year it was in your face. Let's see how it goes this year.

On the prize money announced by World Athletics and given by government: From what I have heard it's only for the gold medalists at Paris for now. But I think it is a good move and a start. Hopefully they will start it in other big events also like the World Championships, Diamond Leagues and Continental events.

As for what the government gives, let's accept it, money is important. Many of our athletes come from normal families and spend a lot on training, so it's good to get financial help. There is not much in athletics compared to other sports but when you get something, it feels good.

INBRIEF

Nagal takes a set off Rune before exiting Monte Carlo

Sumit Nagal took a set off World No. 7 Holger Rune before losing his rain-hit second round match of the Monte Carlo Masters on Thursday. Nagal lost 3-6, 6-3, 2-6 after battling for two hours and 11 minutes. Rohan Bopanna and Australian partner Matthew Ebden had lost their round-of-16 match 3-6, 6(8)-7 to Mate Pavic of Croatia and Marcelo Arevalo of El Salvador on Wednesday.

Other results: Third round: Alex de Minaur bt Alexei Popyrin 6-3, 6-4; Karen Khachanov bt Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 7-5;
Second round: Grigor Dimitrov bt Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 6-3.

Yuki Bhambri-Ariel Behar duo loses in pre-quarterfinals

Yuki Bhambri and Ariel Behar lost 6-3, 4-6, [10-7] to Marcelo Demoliner & Orlando Luz in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €120,950 Challenger in Madrid.

Other results: $82,000 Challenger, Cuernavaca, Mexico: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Arjun Kadhe & Jeevan Nedunchezhiyan bt Alex Hernandez & Manuel Sanchez 6-2, 6-3; Rithvik Bollipalli & Niki Poonacha bt Rinky Hijikata & Mac Kiger 6-3, 6-2.
$82,000 Challenger, Sarasota, USA: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Tristan Boyer & Oliver Crawford bt Sriram Balaji & Andre Begemann 2-6, 6-3, [10-8].
€74,825 Challenger, Split, Croatia: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Alexandru Jecan & Szymon Walkow bt Vijay Sundar Prashanth & Reese Stalder 6-3, 7-5.
$25,000 ITF women, Bujumbura, Burundi: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Kamilla Bartone & Sada Nahimana bt Riya Bhatia & Marie Mettraux 3-6, 6-4, [10-5].

RFDL football tournament from April 12 in four cities

The national group stage of the Reliance Foundation Development League (RFDL) football will take place across four centres in Mumbai, Kozhikode, Delhi, and Goa from April 12 to 26 with 20 teams from eight zones taking part. Five teams have been slotted in each group and they will battle it out across 40 games to make it to the National championships that will host four clubs. The matches will be live streamed on https://www.youtube.com/@RelianceFoundationYouthSports

LIVE TELECAST

IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
ISL: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema App, 7.30 p.m.
Bundesliga: Sony Sports Ten 2 & LIV, 12 a.m. (Saturday)
LaLiga: Sports 18-1 & Jio Cinema App, 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)
Serie A: Sports 18-1) & Jio Cinema App, 12.30 a.m. (Saturday)

Draw keeps Gukesh in joint lead on a day when other Indian men post wins

Praggnanandhaa gets the better of Abasov, while Gujrathi bounces back by scoring over Firouzja in round six; Humpy, Vaishali suffer reverses

CANDIDATES CHESS

Sports Bureau

D. Gukesh maintained his joint lead after drawing with second Hikaru Nakamura of the United States in the sixth round of the Candidates tournament at Toronto on Wednesday.

He shared the top spot with defending champion Russia's Ian Nepomniachtchi, who drew with top seed Fabiano Caruana of the United States. The leaders were on 3.5 points.

They were followed half-a-point behind by Caruana and R. Praggnanandhaa, who defeated Nijat Abasov of Azerbaijan.

It was a good day for the other Indian, Vidit Gujrathi, who beat Alireza Firouzja of France.

Cashing in: Gujrathi, who had endured two straight losses, asserted himself against Firouzja. FIDE

It was the second straight win for Gujrathi, as he showed character by bouncing back from two consecutive losses.

It was a disappointing day for India in the women's tournament, though. Koneru Humpy went down to China's Lei Tingjie, while R. Vaishali lost to Russian Kateryna Lagno. All the four boards produced decisive results, as Tan Zhongyi defeated Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine and Aleksandra Goryachkine of Russia beat Bulgarian Nurgyul Salimova.

Tan remained in the sole position with 4.5 points, half-point more than the second-placed Goryachkina. Humpy was on two points and Vaishali on 2.5.

Strong move

Gukesh faced Sicilian Defence from Nakamura and they decided to split the point after 40 moves. "I thought I had a slight pull in the opening, but his 14th move was very strong," said Gukesh. "I could not really see anything for White after that."

Gujrathi also came across Sicilian Defence but was able to get the full point from an erratic Firouzja.

After winning in 40 moves, Gujrathi said of his rival, "He is on -3, and the tournament is not going his way. It happens; sometimes you become a bit emotional when you're tilted."

The results (sixth round):
Open: Ian Nepomniachtchi (FIDE) 4 drew with Fabiano Caruana (USA) 3.5; D. Gukesh 4 drew with Hikaru Nakamura (USA) 3; R. Praggnanandhaa (3.5) bt Nijat Abasov (Aze) 1.5; Vidit Gujrathi 3 bt Alireza Firouzja (Fra) 1.5.
Women: Tan Zhongyi (Chn) 4.5 bt Anna Muzychuk (Ukr) 2; Nurgyul Salimova (Bul) 2.5 lost to Aleksandra Goryachkina (FIDE) 4; R. Vaishali 2.5 lost to Kateryna Lagno (FIDE) 3.5; Koneru Humpy 2 lost to Lei Tingjie (Chn) 3.

East Zone keeps its nerve, prevails over South in an exciting finish

CRICKET

Lavanya L
PUNE

Apart from those in the two dugouts, there were under 20 people in total at the Maharashtra Cricket Stadium here for the final of the Inter-zonal Multi-Day Trophy. South Zone needed one wicket to pull off a victory, East Zone needed six runs.

The audience

The audience was scorers, the doctors on call, ground staff, caterers, cameramen and logistics staff waiting to run in with the BCCI hoarding for the presentation ceremony, but everything paused as everyone stood waiting for the pendulum's final swing.

Minnu Mani had the ball and was deftly using the cracks in the surface to pose questions to the East batters. On strike, precariously so, were Titas Sadhu and Annapurna Das.

Happy bunch: The victorious East Zone team with the trophy. LAVANYA. L.

It took 12 balls, a lucky boundary and some good running for East to seal a too-close-for-comfort one-wicket win after three gruelling days in the sun.

East Zone coach Umesh Sethi had to keep encouraging the players to talk more to each other so the scorers could leave East's wickets column alone.

Getting richer

Former India captain Shubhangi Kulkarni was in attendance to felicitate the winners, with East getting a cheque for ₹50 lakh for its triumph, while runner-up South got ₹20 lakh.

The scores:
South 133 and 179 lost to East 129 and 184/9 in 61.3 overs (Deepti Sharma 46, Richa Ghosh 33, Sahana Pawar 3/44, Minnu Mani 3/65).
PoM: Minnu Mani.
Player-of-the-tournament: Deepti Sharma.

Sathiyan and Manika exit in quarterfinals

Sports Bureau

India's G. Sathiyan and Manika Batra lost to North Korea's R.I. Jong Sik and Kim Kum Yong 7-11, 10-12, 11-9, 6-11, 6-11 in the quarterfinals of the World mixed doubles Olympic qualification TT at Havirov (Czech Republic) on Thursday.

After beating Georgios Stamatouros and Malamatenia Papadimitriou of Greece 11-8, 11-9, 11-8, 11-6 in the round-of-16, the eighth-seeded Indians could not match the North Koreans.

Sathiyan and Manika will have to win in their half on Friday to make it to the Paris Olympics.

Ankita-Prarthana duo secures win for India

TENNIS

Sports Bureau
NEW DELHI

Ankita Raina and Prarthana Thombare survived three match points to beat Hao-Ching Chan and En Shuo Liang 4-6, 6-1, 15-13 in the decisive doubles, to script a 2-1 victory over Taiwan in the league match of the Asia-Oceania group-1 Billie Jean King Cup women's tennis in Changsha, China, on Thursday.

China beat New Zealand 3-0 and Korea beat Pacific Oceania 3-0.

The result (league):
India bt Taiwan 2-1 (Rutuja Bhosale bt Hao-Ching Chan 6-3, 6-2; Ankita Raina lost to En Shuo Liang 6-2, 4-6, 4-6; Ankita & Prarthana Thombare bt Hao-Ching Chan & En Shuo Liang 4-6, 6-1, 15-13).

Sindhu and Prannoy exit as Indian challenge ends

BADMINTON

Press Trust of India
NINGBO

India's challenge at the Badminton Asia Championships ended after double Olympic medallist P.V. Sindhu and H.S. Prannoy bowed out in pre-quarterfinals of their respective events here on Thursday.

Sindhu, who is desperately seeking to rediscover her form ahead of the Paris Olympics, fought valiantly for an hour and nine minutes, but was outperformed by sixth seed Han Yue of China 21-18, 13-21, 21-17.

It was Sindhu's first loss against Yue, against whom she had a flawless 5-0 record before Thursday's contest.

Seventh seed Prannoy went down meekly to unseeded Lin Chun-Yi of Chinese Taipei 21-18, 21-11 in just 43 minutes.

Tanisha Crasto and Ashwini Ponnappa lost 21-17, 21-12 to third seeded Japanese pair of Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida in the pre-quarterfinals of the women's doubles.

Eight SA venues confirmed for 2027 WC

Agence France-Presse
JOHANNESBURG

Eight venues in South Africa have been confirmed for the 2027 Cricket World Cup, according to Cricket South Africa chief executive Pholetsi Moseki.

In addition to the South African grounds, matches will also be played in Zimbabwe and Namibia, who will co-host the tournament.

Moseki told the South African News24 website that the eight South African venues had been chosen for what he described as "scientific" reasons, including proximity to an airport and the availability of hotel rooms.

South Africa's regular Test venues – Wanderers in Johannesburg, SuperSport Park in Centurion, Newlands in Cape Town, Kingsmead in Durban and St George's Park in Gqeberha – will all host matches.

The Mangaung Oval in Bloemfontein, Boland Park in Paarl and Buffalo Park in East London will be the other venues.

The tournament is scheduled for October and November 2027.

Third win for Punjab and Haryana boys

Sports Bureau

Punjab and Haryana boys and Kerala and Karnataka girls' teams registered their third consecutive wins and confirmed their quarterfinal berths in the 38th National youth basketball in Puduchery on Thursday.

The results:
Boys: Chandigarh 68 bt Odisha 59; Punjab 84 bt Kerala 76; Haryana 66 bt Madhya Pradesh 47; Rajasthan 63 bt Bihar 50.
Girls: Karnataka 67 bt Uttar Pradesh 32; Rajasthan 81 bt Maharashtra 63; Kerala 56 bt Punjab 53; TN 68 bt MP 39.

Udit clinches silver in men's freestyle 57kg

ASIAN WRESTLING

Sports Bureau

Udit endured a heartbreaking moment before claiming the men's freestyle 57kg silver medal as India gathered two bronze medals also on the opening day of the Asian wrestling championships at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on Thursday.

Udit, an Asian under-20 champion, got past Iran's Ebrahim Mahdi Khari 10-8, Kyrgyzstan's Almaz Smanbekov 6-4, and North Korea's Kim Kum Hyok 4-3 to set up a final with Japan's Kento Yumiya.

In a closely-fought title clash, Udit trailed 3-4 before levelling the scores and leading the bout on criteria. He defended well in the closing minute until Yumiya managed to get a hold on the Indian's right leg and effected a push-out in the final second to score a 5-4 win.

India had secured four consecutive gold medals from 2020 to 2023 in this weight. Abhimanyou (70kg) and Vicky (97kg) bagged bronze medals.

Bengaluru FC bows out with a whimper after being hammered by Mohun Bagan Super Giant

ISL

N. Sudarshan
BENGALURU

Mohun Bagan Super Giant kept its hunt for the Indian Super League Shield alive with a 4-0 thrashing of Bengaluru FC at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium here on Thursday.

After Hector Yuste put the side ahead in the 17th minute, the visitors killed the game by the hour mark as Manvir Singh, Anirudh Thapa and Armando Sadiku bulged the net across eight frenetic second-half minutes. Mohun Bagan, thus, rose to 45 points, two behind leader Mumbai City FC. The two will face-off in the last game of the season on Monday in a straight shootout.

Sad end

For BFC, it was a sad end to its campaign as it finished 10th out of 12 teams (22 matches, 22 points). The hammering at Mohun Bagan's hands was its joint-worst at home in the league. That the earlier one also came this season – against MCFC in December that cost the then head coach Simon Grayson his job – told the story.

Overjoyed: Thapa celebrates after scoring Mohun Bagan's third against Bengaluru FC. K. MURALI KUMAR

In the first half, BFC had the lion's share of possession (64-36), but Mohun Bagan was largely in control. Yuste hit the bar, but was sharp enough to volley the rebound in from close range to put Mohun Bagan ahead. BFC could have equalised in the 40th minute, but Sunil Chhetri, after being fouled inside the penalty area, fluffed his spot-kick.

After the restart, Finn Joni Kauko was heavily involved. He created Manvir's goal with a terrific defence-splitting backheel and had a hand in Thapa's strike when he forced a save from Gurpreet Sandhu before Dimitrios Petratos squared the ball. Sadiku's tap-in was the final nail in the coffin.

BFC could have lost by more, but the woodwork saved it from further humiliation.

The result:
Bengaluru FC 0 lost to Mohun Bagan Super Giant 3 (Yuste 17, Manvir 51, Thapa 54, Sadiku 59).

ISL playoffs from April 19; final to be played on May 4

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The final of the Indian Super League (ISL) 2023-24 season will be on May 4 with the playoffs scheduled to start from April 19, Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL), the organiser of the tournament, said on Thursday.

The venue of the final will be announced soon.

"The season final will be held on May 4. The fight for a place in the final starts from April 19 with the knockout matches, followed by the semifinals in home and away format," said a statement.

The top two teams at the end of the league stage will directly qualify for the semifinals, while the sides finishing third to the sixth will play a single-leg playoff in a knockout format to determine the other two semifinalists. The six playoffs teams have already been confirmed.

Playoffs schedule:
Knockouts: April 19 & 20;
Semifinals, first leg: April 23 & 24.
Second leg: April 28 & 29.
Final: May 4.